Art Los Angeles Reader

SOÑADORES
N° 4 | OCTOBER 2017 | READER.LA

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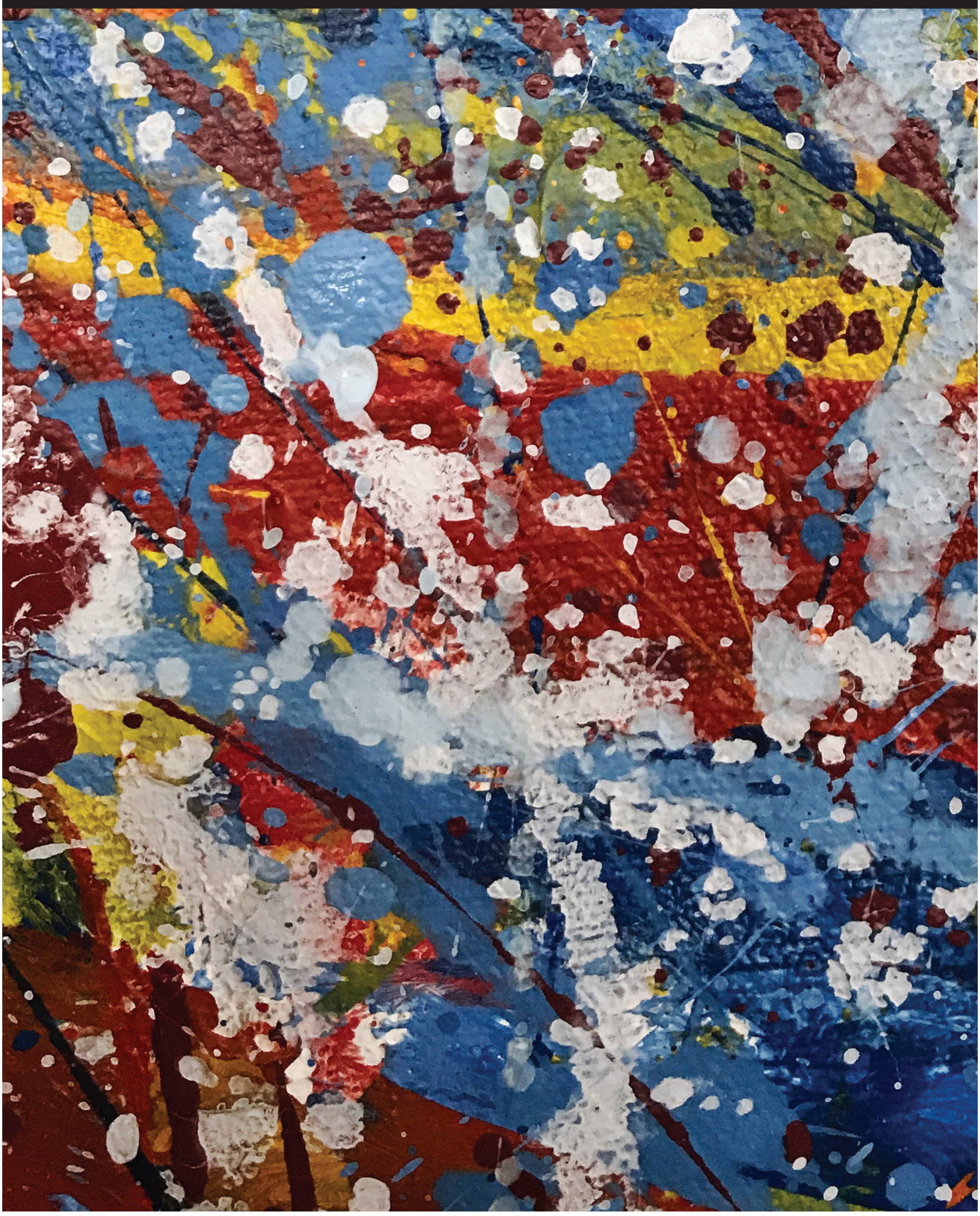

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Art Los Angeles Reader is published by Fair Grounds Associates, LLC, producers of Art Los Angeles Contemporary.

For advertising inquiries call +1 323 851 7530 or visit us online at reader.la.

The Reader is available online at reader.la and at select locations in Los Angeles and beyond. Read and subscribe online.

Art Los Angeles Contemporary will be held January 25-28, 2018 at the Barker Hangar, at the Santa Monica Airport. Visit artlosangelesfair.com.

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FRONT COVER: Sandra Eleta; *Edita (la del plumero), Panamá (Edita [the one with the duster], Panama)*, 1977. From the series *La servidumbre (Servitude)*, 1978–1979. Black and white photograph, 19 × 19 in. Courtesy of Galeria Arteconsult S.A., Panama. Artwork © the artist.

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From the Editors

Ana Mendieta's *La Jungla* would have sat at the corner of Wilshire and Park View in Los Angeles's MacArthur Park: a public jungle-gym comprised of seven tall redwood tree trunks, with human silhouettes and elemental symbols burnt or carved into the bark. Maybe, it would have borrowed from her *Totem Grove* series, turning those earthworks on their sides. Maybe, it would have pressed into her search for diasporic heritage, using nature and the maternal as a surrogate for home. Maybe, it would have echoed the neighborhood itself, where almost seventy percent of locals are foreign-born, and seventy-five are Latinx. In the work's—and the artist's—absence, we only have conditional verbs: visions, imagination, dreams.

Yet Mendieta wanted to make conditionals the very material of her work. She wrote of her decision to begin working with nature, "my paintings were not real enough… by real, I mean I wanted my images to have power, to be magic." Here, reality is determined by magic; in other words, by the stuff of the dreams. This special issue is *Soñadores* (Dreamers), a collaboration with Terremoto Magazine. As a performance of the mission of *PST*, we collide their focus on art of the Americas—a provocation to see across the continent, above borders and nations—with ours on art in Los Angeles—an invitation to use a local microscope that might reveal the globe.

In Terremoto's features (they introduce the Reader's across the page), Joey Terrill tracks the same, utopian operation—mírame (look at me)—in queer Latinx practices across generational divides. Arden Decker explores how the Hammer's exhibition *Radical Women* will re-write art history in the City of Dreams. Eduardo Abaroa and Rubén Ortiz-Torres use NAFTA as a frame for how aesthetics travel across Mexico and Southern California. And Natalia Mendoza and Miguel Fernández de Castro meditate on the slippage between *frontera* and frontier: the border and a colonial horizon. They excavate how social geography is made physical, how the rhetorics of prospecting, of gold panning, are enacted, how they work themselves into the land.

The Reader has commissioned a new performance work by Carmina Escobar, who offers a score for your participation within these pages, *Passing through dimensions*. With it, she invites you to turn the material of paper itself into an instrument to project your voice. We imagine you have a lot to say. We borrow "Dreamers" from a political nightmare: ethno-nationalism empowered against 800,000 Americans. But the artists and writers collected here are working to uninhabit old fantasies and wriggle into new alternatives; to affirm the co-constitution of Los Angeles and Latin America, thread entanglements of liberation within those of exploitation; to excavate, like *La Jungla,* the material remnants of dreams deferred; and to insist, like Mendieta, on the reality of dreams.

— Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal

ALAC's exciting invitation to co-edit the fourth issue of their Reader under the auspices of the *Pacific Standard Time* comes as a welcome recognition of the critical work that Terremoto has been engaging in within the United States' artistic and academic scenes since the inception of its bilingual, commissioned content in early 2015. Since then, Terremoto has been advocating the Americas not as the simple sum of separate, distinct national narratives and problematics, but rather as a complex network of shared histories and joint cultural production possibilities. By introducing each other's commissions within our respective editorial letters, we extend this vision to a practical exercise of understanding and translation, a modest step towards a steadier intellectual exchange between US and Mexican practitioners. Not exempt from a critical questioning about *PST* itself, the present issue affirms both Terremoto's and the Reader's projects participating proudly in the art criticism of their time, in the most uncompromised possible way.

Alma Ruiz then reminds us that the novelty of *Pacific Standard Time* is not as much to have triggered investigation about Latin American & Chicano Art within Californian institutions as to have made preexisting and ongoing ones thoroughly more visible for the greater public —with the aid, most of all financial, of the institutional giant that is the Getty foundation. Suzy Halajian underlines the contemporaneity, almost forty years after, of the artworks, performances and street interventions of the Chicano art collective Asco, and the way they pioneered drawing attention to the multiethnicity of the United States, whose public face of the time aspired to unequivocal whiteness. Eunsong Kim and Gelare Khoshgozaran (creators of the platform Contemptorary.org) explore through Monica Rodriguez's project *Las Antillas para los Antillanos* how artists can use the archive, both personal and public, in order to map more accurately logics of diasporas and historical parallels often unnoticed by the larger, individual official narratives of the Americas. Finally, through an examination of Taco Bell's architectural and visual identity from the 1960s until nowadays, Anthony Carfello and Brian Mann draw our attention to the ambiguities of the famous fast-food chain towards its own declared bicultural identity, framing their intertwining of colonial and marketing logics within the wider corporate restaurant industry architectural production of the time.

These anecdotes, archeologies and gallery of characters compose tales, landscapes and memories that are playing a hide and seek game with the fixed notions of identity that conservative forces aim to affirm. What the present Reader demonstrates is the unstoppable fluidity of mankind's development and the relentlessness of the forces working behind every single destiny: for *no human being is illegal*. The claim of the Dreamers to defend their right to live and fulfill their destiny in a country that they maybe didn't choose, but grew up in and got to consider as home, is an inalienable right that art accompanies through the material, as diverse as it may be, that it currently produces, and for which it will be remembered at least for one part of it, as the culture of our times. Even if we succumb under the attacks, a tribute to our resistance will remain in such endeavors as the modest sheets of paper you actually hold in your hand—from any side of the border they may flip through it.

— Dorothée Dupuis
Diego del Valle Ríos

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“WE WERE TRYING TO REFLECT THE VIOLENCE AROUND US... AND WE WERE BREAKING PEOPLE’S PRECONCEPTION OF WHAT CHICANO ARTISTS SHOULD DO.”

Counterspectacles

Asco's ephemeral actions reconfigured the patterns of public space. by Suzy Halajian

Stations of the Cross (1971) was the East Los Angeles collective's first public spectacle: a walking mural along a one-mile stretch of Whittier Boulevard in East Los Angeles, performed on Christmas Eve. It was also Asco's earliest attempt at reclaiming the streets. The act served as a theatrical, public protest against the Vietnam War. The four main members of the collective—Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk, Willie Herrón III, and Patssi Valdez—formed the carnivalesque work.[1] Herrón led the procession dressed as a colorful combination of a Christlike figure and a skeleton; the muralist Gronk, dressed in a Pontius Pilate costume, blessed the procession with a box of popcorn; Gamboa held up a cardboard-constructed image of a cross; his painted face poked through a dead altar boy costume. As the collective transformed the traditional Mexican Las Posadas[2] ritual, the work served to disturb the Chicanos enlisting for the army on that day. In a repeat performance the next day, Patssi Valdez joined the rest of the members, outfitted in a homemade, glamorized Day of the Dead costume. The performances were witnessed only by a few friends and unknowing passersby.

Throughout Asco's run, from 1971–87, the collective fluctuated between twenty and thirty members. Their main medium was the counterspectacle. They enacted the emancipatory potential of physical space in Los Angeles, and of aesthetic imagination—both of the artists and the spectator. Asco's works decolonized conceptual and high art by reframing Mexican traditions, and remixing street culture, gang culture and homemade Pacheco fashion designs. They used a variety of tactics such as guerilla street theater, hit-and-run interventions, performances, graffiti, and image stills. Documentation served as an important tool for Asco, which is the Spanish word for disgust, as in '*me da asco*' or 'it [your art] disgusts me,' derived from an exhibition the artists organized called asco-zilla, in which the collective humorously exhibited bad works of art that would otherwise not be seen.

Chicano scholar Chon A. Noriega writes, "By naming themselves Asco, the artists refuse the notion that their work falls outside the norms or boundaries of the Mexican descent community in East Los Angeles. Instead, they reinsert their art within the cultural logic of the community itself…"[3] From the start, Asco wanted their productions to serve as a counternarrative to the "Mural Movement and the Chicano Art Movement [which] had become the 'frozen revolution' of Mexico…"[4] For their work *Instant Mural* (1974), the muralist Gronk reappropriated a blank wall outside of a liquor store in East Los Angeles and used masking tape to attach Asco's Patssi Valdez and Humberto Sandoval to the wall. In photo documentation, a glamorized Patssi stands in profile, dressed in high platforms, short jean shorts, and a bright red jacket. Playfully ridiculing the muralist tradition's penchant for large-scale heroism and glamorization of labor, Asco challenged what a Chicano mural could look like, move like, and furthermore, the way public space could house a more accurate, or irreverent representation of a community in flux.

Using streets known to their communities for police brutality and surveillance, Asco viewed the walking mural as a humorous act whose theatrics did not detract from their activist agenda. As Gamboa states, "We were trying to reflect the violence around us…and we were breaking people's preconception of what Chicano artists should do."[5] From the beginning, Asco recognized space as both a conceptual and activist terrain in which the work could serve as politics.

In the 1974 work *First Supper (After a Major Riot)*, the artists staged a Christmas Eve dinner party on a busy traffic island on Arizona Street and Whittier Boulevard. This particular island had been built over a bloody site of the East LA riots; a 1973 urban development process had leveled the areas around the island to prevent further demonstrations. The four artists put on a carnival-inspired spectacle in the middle of this location, seated in mismatched chairs at a white linen-covered table, adorned with painted faces, masks, top hats, and as Gamboa recalls, "a large nude doll, paintings of tortured corpses, mirrors, chairs, food, drink, and riotous guests."[6]

As art historian Rosalyn Deutsche writes, "Public space is the limit of tutelary power. It is the space where people declare rights and which, paradoxically, is constituted through declaration. A fixed point of access to politics, a unique space of the political, and the essence of social reality…"[7] In short, space is not neutral: it is the result of political struggle, just as it is the site where political struggle takes place. *First Supper (After a Major Riot)* was a performative gesture that established a temporary political space—one that acknowledged those systems of exclusion and erasure which sought to snuff out a community's memory as much as its members. Though no spectators joined the dinner party—many honked their horns[8]—it was nonetheless an invitation.

As philosopher Henri Lefebvre has remarked, "Inasmuch as abstract space [of modernism and capital] tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) until it accentuates differences."[9] Through mobile, performative interventions such as *Stations of the Cross* and *First Supper (After a Major Riot)*, Asco called into question the neutrality of both public space and the space of art institutions. Challenging the "authenticity" of Chicano representations and their "frozen" codification within art, Asco privileged their immediate community as their audience and expanded the way Chicano history and identity could be understood from within and without. Asco's ephemeral actions interrupted and reconfigured the normal pattern of public space, attending to erased histories, contestations, and ongoing struggles. With the streets of Los Angeles as both the set for their work and its subject, the artists used their bodies and the public to work out new definitions for an avant-garde. ℝ

SUZY HALAJIAN is a curator in Los Angeles.

ABOVE_ *X's Party*, ©1982, Harry Gamboa Jr.

OPPOSITE PAGE

ABOVE_ *First Supper (After A Major Riot)*, ©1974, Harry Gamboa Jr.

BELOW_ *Spray Paint* LACMA, ©1972, Harry Gamboa Jr.

1_ The four main members of Asco met in the politically charged environment of Garfield High School in East Los Angeles. Harry Gamboa Jr. was a major organizer of the school protests against the racist school policies and inadequate education, known as the "blowouts." Soon after, a fueled Gamboa formed the art and literary journal *Regeneración* and invited the others to collaborate.

2_ Las Posadas is a nine-day Mexican festival that reenacts the Bible story of Joseph's search for shelter. It is celebrated mainly in Mexico and Guatemala. The procession begins December 16th and ends December 24th.

3_ Chon A. Noriega, "Your Art Disgusts Me: Early Asco: 1971-75," Afterall 9 (2008): 74.

4_ C. Ondine Chavoya, "Internal Exiles: The Interventionist Public and Performance Art of Asco," *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. Suderburg, Erika (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 2000), 194.

5_ Rita Gonzalez, "Phantom Sites: the Official, the Unofficial, and the Orificial," *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, ed. Rita Gonzalez, Howard N. Fox, Chon A. Noriega (Los Angeles: U of California P, 2008) 48.

6_ Harry Gamboa Jr., *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 80.

7_ Rosalyn Deutsche, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," Social Text 39 (1992): 51.

8_ As Gamboa recalls, "The immediate reaction of the audience was primarily confusion laced with verbal hostility."

9_ Henri Lefebvre, "Plan of the Present Work" trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991): 52.

Let the Building Be the Sign

From Missions to Mission-style to Mission-branded cubes: how Taco Bell architecture tells us the history of Southern California.

by Anthony Carfello and Brian Mann

"You let the building be the sign" was architect Robert McKay's promise. His 1962 roadside masterwork shot up at 7126 Firestone Boulevard in the southeastern L.A. County suburb of Downey. A collage of allusions to California's twenty-one Franciscan missions, it featured: stucco painted beige to look like broad adobe walls; red clay tiles; exposed, ornamental wooden beams or *vigas* poking out below the roof's edge; an outdoor corridor with three wide arches; and, set within the top of the facade, a bell, after the famous *campanarios*–the flat, and uniquely Californian treatments of belfries. At the time of construction, McKay and the building's owner, entrepreneur Glen Bell, had plans to develop the adjacent lots into a strip mall version of downtown Los Angeles's Olvera Street, a fantasy Mexican plaza imagined for pedestrian tourists. Unlike Olvera Street, this plaza would be oriented toward passing traffic.

ABOVE_ The first Taco Bell, Downey, CA, 1962. Photo courtesy of Taco Bell Corp.

BELOW_ *Mission San Gabriel Arcangel, circa 1897.* Photo courtesy of the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

ROBERT MCKAY CALLED TACO BELLS "ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS" THAT WERE PART OF AN "EDUCATION PROCESS" IN CULTURE AND CUISINE; THE COMPANY WOULD NEVER DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ITS NOTION OF "MEXICAN" AND ITS MISSION REFERENT.

Beginning in the 1920s and '30s and extending through the post-war period, roadsides around the country filled with service stations, diners, and cafes that competed for a higher-speed audience than ever before. Fortunes were made and lost on grabbing their attention. An architecture of referential signage emerged, first on the East Coast as the bright orange roofs of Howard Johnson's, then crossing the continent as coffee shops shaped like coffee pots, tamale stands shaped like tamales, and restaurants shaped like a bowler hats, hot dogs, and Boston terriers. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steve Izenour's landmark architectural study *Learning from Las Vegas* named these "ducks"–after a duck-shaped building on Long Island, which sold duck eggs.[1] Along the roads connecting the distant real estate developments of Southern California, ducks proliferated.

The road was also a place to be themed, a California practice since at least 1904, when over 400 bells hanging on curved posts were installed along what would become Routes 101 and 82. The bells decorated the length of the supposed El Camino Real (The King's Highway), re-branding the series of pathways linking all the state's missions between San Diego and Sonoma as California's colonial freeway. From 1769–1833, the missions represented land grabs and slavery. In the late 1880s, California's self-evangelization gave them an image makeover, infusing their shared structural language–arches, clay tile roofs with projecting eaves, sandstone, adobe, and of course, bells–with the romance of travel and history.

In 1884, the *Los Angeles Times* hired Cincinnati journalist Charles Fletcher Lummis, whose penchant for myth and purple prose filled dispatches from the Southwest that satisfied an Anglo readership viewing Mexican and Native cultures as distant other. That same year, Helen Hunt Jackson published her novel *Ramona* about a Native American-Scottish orphan girl and the ostracization and racism she faced growing up in Southern California. Jackson hoped to use the novel to draw nationwide support for Native rights. Instead, her massive readership interpreted the book's depictions of mission life as exotic and charming, and tourists came westward by rail to seek out the sun-drenched ranchos they'd read about. With Lummis's writing–like his book *The Home of Ramona* (1888)–and railroad-produced tabloids, *Ramona*-mania shifted mission-era architecture from a site-specific eighteenth- and nineteenth-century building method to a nostalgia device. Mission style was made exportable, peppered around the state's civic and domestic buildings in Mission Revival and later Spanish Colonial Revival trends. By the time Glen Bell was born in 1923, mission was a decor that could easily laminate any location with its ambience. *Learning from Las Vegas* calls this "decorated shed" architecture, where any building can be themed by ornamentation, independent of its original design.[2]

During the 1940s and '50s atomic age, Googie-esque coffee shops blended architecture and logo into futuristic roadside ducks. From his own hamburger stand in San Bernardino, Bell watched up-close how McDonald's Golden Arches took Googie strategy and combined it with a franchisable food factory. Looking for his own niche, Bell copied from a neighboring Mexican restaurant, adding tacos to his menu while removing ingredients too spicy for the mass and white customer base he sought to reach. Bell found traditional tacos too messy to be mechanized and adapted an existing method of lightly frying tortillas to make multiple pre-formed taco shells at one time. Borrowing from the McDonald brothers, he built a taco-filling assembly line around racks of U-shaped hard shells and started the small chains Taco-Tia and El Taco.

The coincidence of Bell's homophone name would eventually be made into both a brand, Taco Bell, and a visual motif. Despite serving dulled Mexican staples, Bell and McKay's Downey Taco Bell would double down on the same historical revisionism unique to the region that spawned Hollywood. As used by the Franciscan missionaries, these bells–architectural crowns of each mission–sang their presence daily throughout the colonial regions as part of the church's domination over indigenous people's lives. Represented in *Ramona*-inspired movies and lyrics, the bells fueled saccharine imagery–"Ramona, I hear the mission bells above; Ramona, they're ringing out our song of love"–motivated the Automobile Club of Southern California's promotion of the El Camino Real as a road trip route, and gave Bell's new venture its name.[3]

Glen Bell's first franchisee was LAPD Officer Kermitt Bekke, who opened the next Taco Bell in Torrance in 1964, soon after eating his first taco. One hundred mini missions sprang up throughout the western US in the three years that followed, with ribbon-cutting events that featured mariachis and Mexican folk dancers. Robert McKay called Taco Bells "architectural monuments" that were part of an "education process" in culture and cuisine. The company would never distinguish between its notion of "Mexican" and its mission referent, severing any lingering comprehension of the relation to Spanish colonialism in either Alta California territory or Mexico proper. Reading "Sí…Soon! another Taco Bell," the signs at construction sites for new locations in the '60s showed a sombrero-wearing, serape-draped caricature of a Mexican boy running with a wheelbarrow filled with a rendering of a Taco Bell building.

As freestanding structures, Taco Bells were primarily located on major thoroughfares in the suburbs. The brick buildings stayed committed to "duckness" through the 1970s, with pronounced mission style on the exteriors even as they were constructed in locations further and further from the El Camino Real. When Glen Bell sold all 868 locations to Pepsi Co. in 1978, the architecture began to feature prominently in TV commercials, opening and closing with shots of a model Taco Bell nearly identical to the original, but set amid the rolling hills of Main Street USA. Slogans like "Now That's a Fresh Idea," "The Fresh Food Place," "Deliciously Different" and "Make a Run for the Border" would pronounce the novelty of "Mexican" food. The menu would grow through the years to include gringo experiments like the Enchirito (c. 1970), the Bell Beefer (mid-1970s), the Taco Salad (1984), Mexican Pizza (1988), the Cheesy Gordita Crunch (2000), and the Quesarito (2014).

As the roadside sign was supplanted by television advertising, Taco Bell architecture followed suit. In commercials, images of their buildings were abstracted and dropped into all types of settings, from Gotham City to the Arizona desert. Graphics of the arched facade were stripped down into a logo: a bell within a color-block arch. The logo commanded the interiors of each location, from adorning napkins and cups to posters and uniforms. Mission style as simulacra began to take over.

In the mid-1980s, Taco Bells switched to cheaper construction materials like wood, stucco, and sheetrock. Designs amplified a specific selection of architectural references: the arches stretched past the roof on all sides; clay tiles were mimicked with pre-formed cladding; archways became glazing; and glowing signage replaced the *campanarios*. Concurrently, many California towns and suburbs incorporated mission-style decorations into their official building codes, contributing Spanish-tiled Chevron stations and other decorated sheds to the overall landscape.

Growing to thousands of restaurants worldwide, Taco Bell reduced its branded architecture further. The bells and arches were powerful enough–in print, on video, or as audio through its "bong" sound, used since 1989–that planning a specific building to physically realize them became an unnecessary cost. Taco Bell opted to integrate these previously built forms into degrees of branding that could easily up-

1_ Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steve Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977/1972), 87.

2_ Ibid.

3_ L. Wolfe Gilbert and Mabel Wayne's "Ramona" was written as the title song for the 1928 adventure film-romance adaptation of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel. Nathan Masters, *How El Camino Real, California's 'Royal Road,' Was Invented*, KCET.org: Lost LA, January 4, 2013; Bob Pool, "Saga of the Bells Comes Full Circle," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 2006; Brady MacDonald, "In Search of the Royal Road," *Los Angeles Times*, July 07, 2003.

holster newer locations and designate any place as a link in the chain. Since the mid-1990s, new Taco Bell locations have been no more than stucco boxes with signage referencing an arch shape, fake bricks glued to the facade, and bell logos. After 1995, Taco Bell began to "co-brand" with other global chains Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut, using only half of a stucco box.

Early Taco Bells are now curios of building typology. Most of the 1960s and '70s buildings have become ruins of the first era of the Bell Empire, available for lease to new restaurants and other businesses taking advantage of heavily trafficked suburban streets. No place promotes the fact that it used to be a Taco Bell. Architectural details are sometimes renewed as "Mexican"—especially if housing a Mexican-themed restaurant—or become simply "Spanish style," often times camouflaged or repressed with paint jobs, new signage, or a simple refusal to acknowledge the obvious.

Until 2015, the original 1962 Taco Bell in Downey operated for years as Seafood Raúl, an actual Mexican-style taco stand across the street from a newer, stucco box Taco Bell, which sits there still. When the owner opted to demolish Seafood Raúl, the Downey Conservancy announced that the building was "endangered" and proposed that it be relocated within the city for adaptive reuse as a tourist center. Capitalizing on the public's instinct for historic preservation, Taco Bell mounted its own campaign to "#SaveNumeroUno" before buying the structure, replacing Raúl's sign with a Taco Bell one, and trucking the monument through the night along the El Camino Real to the campus of their Irvine headquarters, roughly twenty miles north of the tourist site of Mission San Juan Capistrano.

Revaluing leftovers and selling them as vintage artifacts has remained lucrative ever since Lummis's rose-colored writing about California's missions. Akin to #SaveNumeroUno, LA artist Eric Wesley's residency / gallery, The Bell (2016)—a repurposed early Taco Bell in the Illinois suburbs of St. Louis—brought the loft aesthetics and nostalgic tendencies that drive today's urban gentrification processes out to the suburbs, a hybrid of white cube, roadside, and romantic projection. "Where customers once chomped on Chalupa Supremes in swivel chairs and vinyl-padded booths now sits a light-filled gallery space with white walls and wood floors," writes Artsy.com in celebration of Wesley's renewal of the Taco Bell's "seedy, decayed version of suburban life."

In 2016, Taco Bell revealed new building designs: glass boxes that can quickly sprout anywhere, with graphic ornamentation options called "modern explorer," "California sol," "heritage," and "urban edge"—choices offered to potential franchisees as if on a menu. As McDonald's and Taco Bell learned early on, the product of a franchising corporation isn't the #4 combo special, but rather the usage rights to the brand name and logo. The success or failure of any restaurant is far less important to the company than its continued expansion. Ducks have given way to hermit crab shells, as individual locations can be inhabited and evacuated so long as the logo keeps moving from one home to another, multiplying and planting imperial flags along the way.

From art galleries to CrossFits to H&R Blocks, contemporary fast food franchise models have appealed to other businesses because they demonstrate the ability to decorate any shed and inexpensively impose themed architecture from the inside, using previous structures as host bodies. The 1993 film *Demolition Man* imagines the year 2032, when Taco Bell has triumphed in what the characters call the "Franchise Wars." As the future cop Lieutenant Lenina Huxley informs the perplexed demolition man, "Now all restaurants are Taco Bell." ℝ

BRIAN MANN is an artist.
ANTHONY CARFELLO is Deputy Director of the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House.

ABOVE_ The relocation of the first Taco Bell from Downey to Irving, CA, 2015. Photo courtesy of Taco Bell Corp.

MIDDLE_ Original Taco Bell signs, Fresco, CA. Photo by Charles Hathaway.

BELOW_ New Taco Bell in South Gate, CA. Photo courtesy of Taco Bell Corp.

Unsettled: Limits and Domains

When the concept of the frontier touches down at the border between Mexico and the US. by Natalia Mendoza and Miguel Fernández de Castro

In 1768, the Marquis de Rubí—following an inspection that took him two years and three thousand leagues—sent Viceroy Croix a proposal to solve defense, provisioning, and corruption problems at New Spain's northern frontier. In the document, the marquis proposed for the first time the idea that the North's defense required a *line*; that the border must not be thought of as an amorphous, open area but rather as fixed, straight, and regular. And that, therefore, *presidios*—i.e. fortresses used to defend those limits—must be relocated to "form a cordon," rather than remain in their current irregular and poorly connected grid.

Just a few decades earlier, the controversy with regard to the leveling of the land had been resolved. A rectification of latitudes and longitudes was in process, and for the first time it was possible to precisely represent the location of any point in space. Armed with these certainties, the Marquis de Rubí decided to link the projected line of defense with a line of latitude. He writes: "Let us suppose there is a line that runs along the 30th parallel North and that it connects the Presidio de Altar with the mouth of the Guadalupe River at the Gulf of Mexico. The real line of defense ought to follow that imaginary line as closely as possible." That line of defense, the marquis declares, encloses the Crown's *real possessions*; the territories that lie beyond are in fact *imaginary domains* whose defense, even in passing, the marquis considers an unjustified expense.

Thus in Mexico began the tradition that understands the border exclusively as a line and not a state of the territory or some unfinished form of domain. The word *frontier* and the Spanish-language *frontera* are false etymological cognates. In Spanish, *frontera* almost exclusively refers to the precise line that separates two nations. However, *frontier* in English designates what lies beyond civilization, the confines of the known world, and a horizon for conquest. *Frontera* suggests containment; *frontier*, an overflowing, like sand that creeps onto a highway or water that spills over. A line traced appropriates a determined space, measures and fixes it. Flowing over, on the other hand, while implying a demarcation, also hides it.

The Marquis de Rubí's insistence on setting the *presidios* along a "cordon of defense," in addition to separating the *de facto* domains from the imaginary ones, marks the end of the *derrotero* literary genre. More like a logbook than a map, a *derrotero* describes a meandering journey through unknown, polymorphous lands. It opens a gap at the same time that it transcribes movement. A good example is Pedro de Rivera's 1736 *El diario y derrotero de lo caminado, visto y observado*, which he wrote on his journey to the northern presidios. Pedro de Rivera's route weaves a net of comings-and-goings, whose nodes are places with known names where travelers may take refuge from the indistinct nature of those surroundings:

> Day 10, en route to the Northeast, over lands with no perceivable relief, like what came before, with bald peaks in view; I walked eight leagues and stopped at an uninhabited place they call Ojos Azules (leg. 375).

Pedro de Rivera's writing is a foundational act: it inaugurates and opens space for something to happen. Although the *derrotero* record the act of founding, it is an open and diffuse process: in it, any social practice can develop and the law has yet to come in to regulate things. The narration announces the land's action-possibilities, but at the same time establishes its boundaries. The ability to *move out of* the established grid and get lost inland also has the paradoxical effect of establishing the new space's boundaries and translating matter into value.

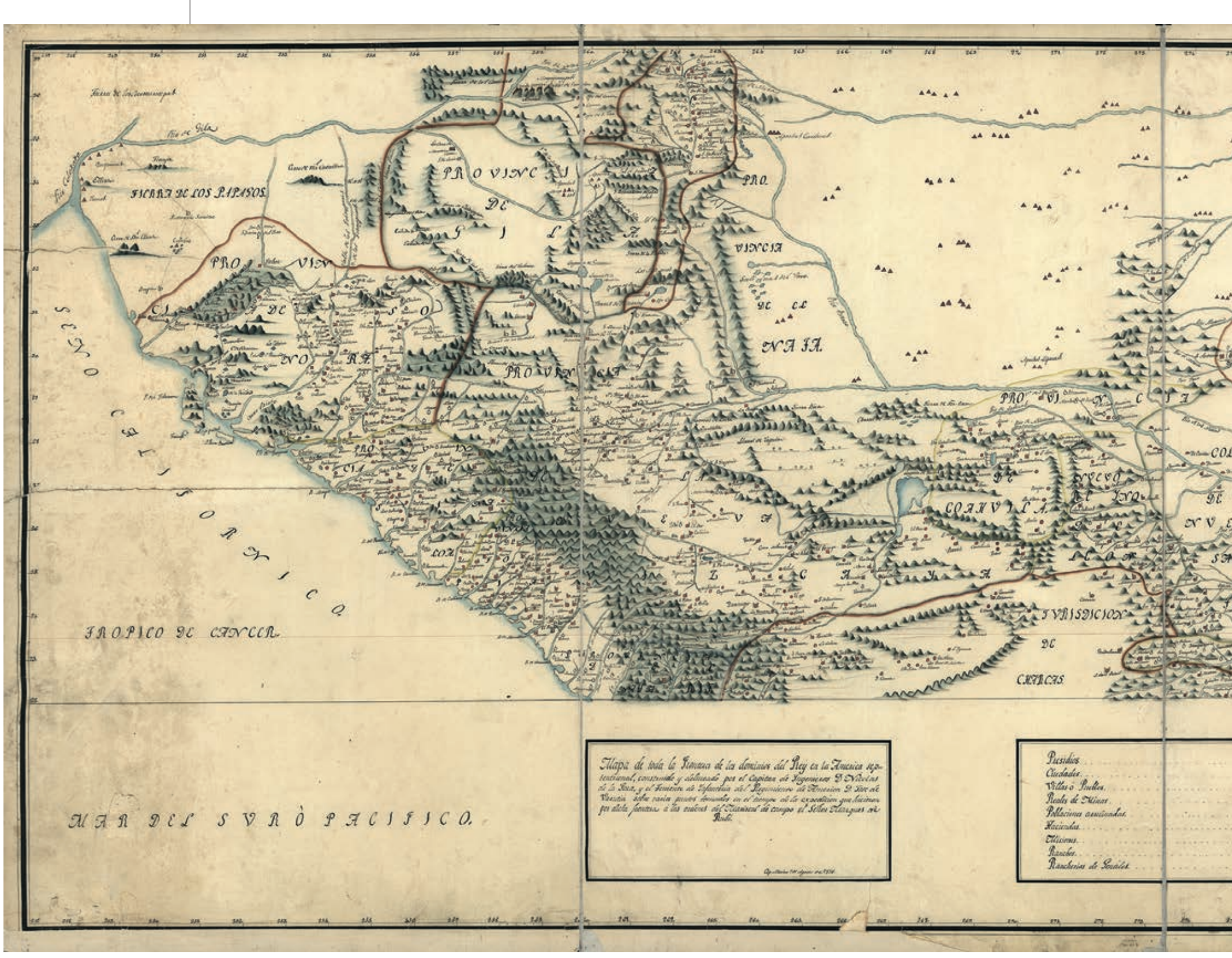
The journeys traced out in *derroteros* seem to have no route, but all these wanderings could be organized along two vectors. The first is prospecting for mineral wealth: "the entire surroundings of the mentioned province are an uninterrupted deposit of Gold and Silver," de Rivera speculates. The second is the reduction and "pacification" of indigenous settlers in revolt. In addition to being foundational in the sense that it constitutes an inaugural representation, *derrotero* writing describes and puts in place foundational political acts. The following passage from de Rivera's *Diario* could be read as a peripheral variation of the notion of the social contract that framed European political philosophy of the era:

> Once I reached the previously mentioned presidio at El Paso, a number of Suma-nation Indians arrived, and, although they had been enemies that carried out sundry hostilities in that land, with great deference they requested submission to Peace, they then being fatigued by the war they had experienced against those arms. And, desirous of their quietude, as well as that of the surrounding area, I granted them an assurance of what they requested and I admonished them to settle, to live within political systems; they would be given supplies as long as they would take them, in the land in which they were to plant, as well as implements to cultivate that land, which they heartily embraced (leg. 950).

It is significant that what de Rivera understands as the shift from a natural state to political life is described as an asymmetrical gift exchange. The Suma, exhausted from so much armed suffering, *submitted* in exchange for peace that was *vouchsafed* them. With it, they received other gifts that put an end to their movements, such as provisions, tools, and parcels for cultivation. Therefore, achieving peace and becoming a part of political life implies not just renouncing the nomadic existence but also becoming indebted to the empire, becoming a subject. It could be said the Suma paid for those parcels with the territory they ceded, and with their liberty paid for "the quietude of the surrounding area" that de Rivera so urgently desired. But the deep asymmetry of this exchange lies precisely in the fact that the side that lost more is the side that ends up being represented as the recipient of a gift and as such is the obliged, indebted side.

That asymmetry derives from the right of conquest, but also from the fact that the space surrounding the settlements is seen as *empty* (given that circulating in a territory is not considered a form of property ownership). One of the words that appears most

BELOW_ "Map of the whole border of the domains of the King in North America built and delineated by the captain of Engineers Don Nicolás de la Fora and the lieutenant of infantry of the American Regiment Don José de Urrutia on several points taken at the time of the expedition they made through that border by the orders of the Field Marshal Mr. Marques de Rubí, circa 1776." Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



frequently in Pedro de Rivera's *derrotero* is "uninhabited." It could be said a frontier is born when the space beyond a certain threshold is declared *empty*. The illusion of virgin lands always underlies frontier writing and announces extermination's real violence.

That same territory would be defined as "uninhabited" or empty, on multiple occasions in successive centuries. In this context, "uninhabited" works as a kind of state apparatus that prepares the ground for intervention from a far-off center more than a descriptive term.

The empire inaugurates a frontier by describing it as an empty space available for fresh settlement, but it also seeks to close it, declaring it to be *full*. In 1890, for example, one year following the Oklahoma Land Rush, the US Census Bureau Director declared the frontier had been closed–free land had run out. The census demonstrated there was no longer a line beyond which population density was less than two persons per square mile. If the inauguration is blind, the closure is premature. Both ignore the primacy of the space itself, its enormity, independence, and infinite folds. The empire gets around on highways and railroads, it constructs a fixed and increasingly dense network, but the same means that allow it to shorten distances also restrict it to a single channel. Outside those channels, a space open to digression–a frontier–remains.

Frontier is a critical concept that designates a territory's liminal state, neither inside nor outside, not *yet* and no longer. It simultaneously indicates two sides of an asymmetrical relationship: a space on the verge of being conquered and the small threshold of unfinished expansion, of the illegible, an intermediate state between foundation and movement.

The very fact that there is no exact translation of frontier into today's Spanish suggests a particular relationship to territory and its control at the time of the conquest. The subtle linguistic difference between *frontera* and frontier is somehow symptomatic of the United States-Mexico relationship. Seen from one perspective, the limit is a line, from another, a domain for expansion. The line is unilateral, the stronger party draws it and maintains it; its vocation is not to contain the expansion of what lies within but to prevent invasion from what lies without.

The party that builds barricades enunciates its power and hangs back, waiting for the barbarians to rise on an as-yet open horizon–the "imaginary domains" that extend beyond the Marquis de Rubí's cordon of defense, for example. On the contrary, the gaze of those who see barricades being raised fixates on and gets consumed by the line which closes off their horizon, and which almost absolutely distinguishes their without from their within. At the same time, the certainty of the border as a line has served to support the artifice of the Mexican nation, creating an illusion of the interior as a solid, known figure, with no cracks or exceptions, ever the more compact in its nationalism, the more expansive the empire above it becomes.

The primacy of the line has led to an obsession with crossing, hybridization, rupture, and bi-national pastiche as the northern border's central attributes. Whether as fault line or contact area, the line has appropriated all questions and answers. It even dictates the most common mode of critique, which, predictably, has sought to *erase* that line, to intervene, returning it to a previous location or denouncing its arbitrary, artificial nature. In short, to endorse an illusion of natural or cultural continuity the line interrupted, as if it were possible to speak of a nature previous or external to the conceptual history of the natural. It is specifically the history of that series of distinctions–between nature and artifice, civilization and barbarism, the human and the animal–that is contained in the term *frontier* and that merits a critical rethinking.

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One of the most emblematic figures of the frontier is the solitary gold prospector, known as a *gambusino* in Spanish. We do not know the word's origin with certainty; it has been suggested it could be a typical frontier deformation of "gamble-business" in English. It may also have derived from the archaic Spanish-language term *gamusino*, i.e., "imaginary animal, whose name is used to play jokes on neophyte hunters." The *gambusino* is one of those mythic figures motivated by an irrepressible yen for chimerical searches or hunting.

Their search only makes sense because–in a civilization's reserve–gold is the repository of abstract value. Nevertheless, the fact that their desire presents as fever suggests intervention on the part of forces of another nature, perhaps closer to madness or mysticism. Fever is a passion in the original sense, an ailment that affects the organism from without. In contrast to the Spanish Conquest of the Americas, fever is not an inflammation of will but the will's submission. The *gambusino* prospector *does not exist except when afflicted with fever*, a gold-fever that is at the same time real and illusory in its relation to foundation: rarely does he acquire the riches appropriate to the intensity of his passion, yet gold's promise is enough to drive his wanderings.

This prospector's solitary search replicates the territorial movements that have led to hidden as well as exposed deposits: veins and placers. Mineral placers originate in alluvial systems. The ancient flows that carried minerals feature interstices where movement stopped, thus forming sand deposits on the edges of the current. Only minerals of the greatest surface hardness resist erosion and generate sediments. Prospectors look for this combination of conditions and use a sieve or "pan" to filter impurities from the excavated sand. Panning is a filtration and classification process that winnows out sand grains through a network of holes and mesh. Through repeated circular movement, the desired mineral remains on the surface.

Today's prospector sifts through soil excavated long ago, in search of gold flecks that slipped through erstwhile miners' filters. He's more an archaeologist than a geologist, digging through the ruins and remains of a previous time. As he walks along, he creates a space of enunciation, a geography of fortuitous discoveries for which narration and memory are absolutely required:

> It wasn't over there; they laid out this road here…we'll see it in just a bit. There's gold in all of this dirt…still…a little. No, you don't get lost, the fence is right here. It's dirt they took from inside the holes. This fine dirt is called lava. And that thick sand is called gravel (granceros). The only thing is I can't find the labor; but you'll see, it ought to be around here somewhere. What we call the labor is the tunnel they pull all this dirt from. There's a tomb there, look…what I'd give to know whose it is. In all this lava you can pull out a very fine gold, as fine as flour, or sugar–like sugar crystals. We had tents. In fact, when we cut out, these kids came and swept up the camp because they said Estela was throwing away a lot of gold. She was the one that washed the gold and she let it fall right there, it was so fine; and with time it piled up. They came to look and got grams' worth from what we had thrown away. Look, this is the dirt I'm talking about. Where did they pull it out or bring it from? You can't imagine the gold we extracted. We sold hundreds of grams–hundreds of grams. Here's where "El Pipa" pulled out a four-gram nugget. Such a lazy guy. And he landed a nugget. We'd been working for hours; he'd show up at nine. It's pretty late, I told him. No, he said, one shovelful and I'll get the gold. He found the nugget in less than an hour. See you around, he said. Gold is for layabouts. It's luck.

Prospectors operate outside the law and avoid jeopardizing their discoveries by making their way through open territory. They bet on technical progress that lets them pan more precisely, but above all, they bet on mistakes, since what they gather is specifically gold left over from past extractions.

> We worked there for months. It's like sand. Yes, this is subsoil dirt. From tunnels. We were here when the dust storm hit. See all those bald hills? The machinery that was there worked them. That's the Cerro Colorado Mine. They reduced that red hill to rubble, did away with it. Then they stopped. This is the dirt we sifted through as scavengers. Then a friend told me he went and dug in with a mallet and a chisel and he scratched at the columns and pulled out some gold flecks, that was how he ate. He went around with a mallet and chisel pulling out gold flecks. When does it end? You go looking again and you pull it out, really fine; the gold never ends. In fact, my brother-in-law has dirt in his house and every time he picks off a louse he pulls out more. Enough to eat on. He's got dirt and he's combed it more than ten times now and there's still gold. We were sitting one day under a cart, during

ABOVE_ Gambusinos at the municipality of Caborca, Sonora. June 2017. Photo by Miguel Fernández de Castro.

THE VERY FACT THAT THERE IS NO EXACT TRANSLATION OF FRONTIER INTO TODAY'S SPANISH SUGGESTS A PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIP TO TERRITORY AND ITS CONTROL. THE SUBTLE LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *FRONTERA* AND FRONTIER IS SOMEHOW SYMPTOMATIC OF THE UNITED STATES-MEXICO RELATIONSHIP.

the hot season. It was there. He collected twenty-five flecks, dusting off the dirt with a toothpick, twenty-five. Let's move the cart, he said. We pushed it forward and went to work right here. We pulled out like twenty grams overnight. The bees stung my buddy Beto while he was working. They ate him alive, but there was so much gold he put up with it. There's another tunnel over there. Then they were very squared off, very neat. They're from the past century. They say the tunnels connected from below–that's what they say.

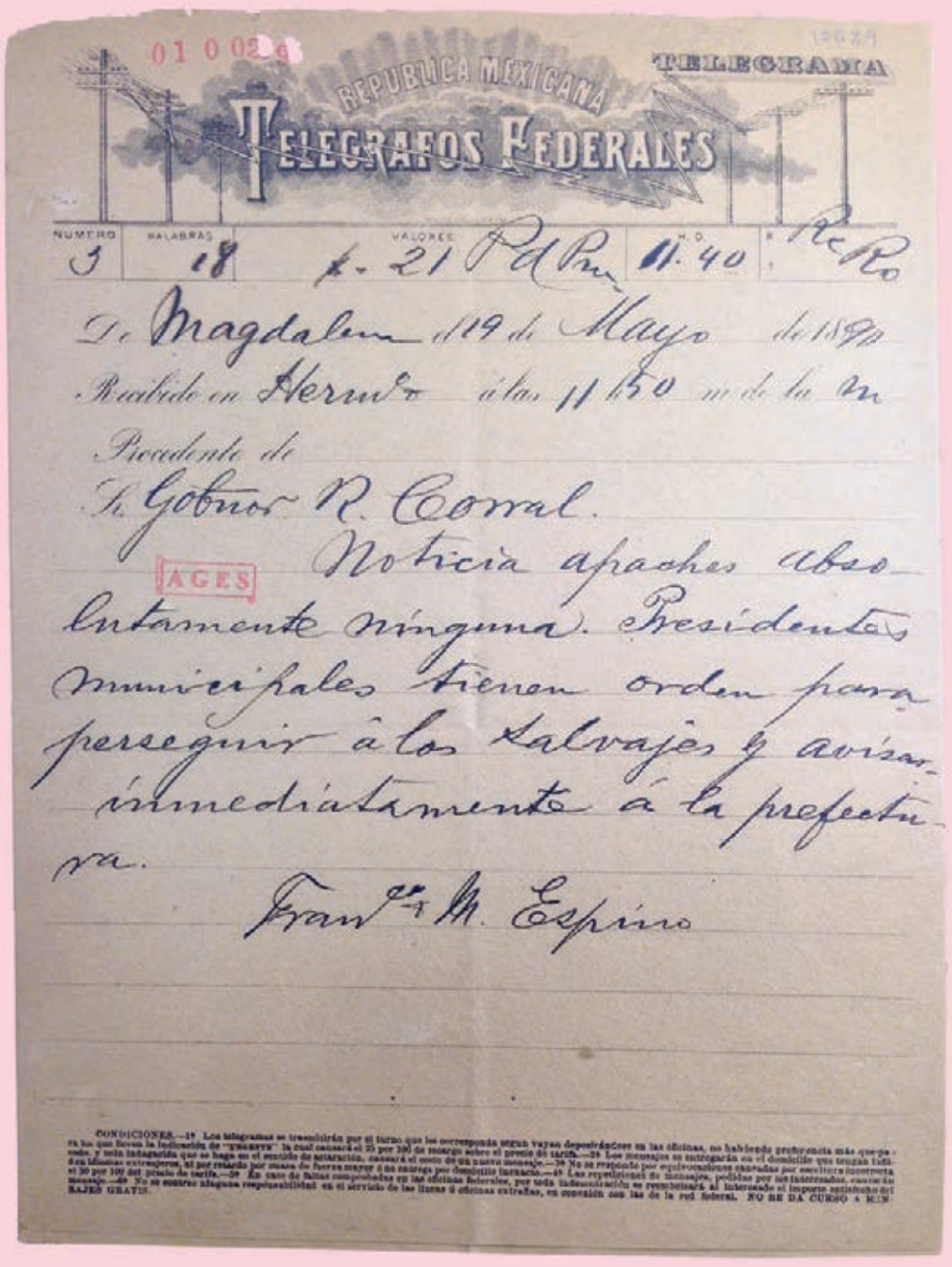
Rafael Quiroz Celaya, Rancho El Tiro,
Trincheras, January 6, 2017

The *gambusino* prospector becomes as such when he accumulates a series of tunnels he can visit. Collecting dirt piles is a way to capitalize: only by creating a tissue of hillocks with potential value is it possible to hold on to the promise of gold. These small mounds of excavated dirt are like precarious fortresses of what has already been rooted through, panned, and appropriated, but those ruins are also a sort of opaque speculation: *they have to be there*, but neither their true value nor their duration is known. Far from indicating exhaustion, this random collection of hillocks has an effect of unfolding the territory and opening a new frontier, a margin of undefined potential within the fenced-in polygon of private property.

Rhythms and tempos that are different from that of technique, like fever and luck, flourish in that space–moments of uncertainty and instability that shirk precaution and control. The prospector's time is defined by the arrhythmia of chance, which by definition is unmerited and disproportionate–"gold is for layabouts." It is precisely this time made up of fevers, euphorias, and temporary campgrounds that corresponds to this territory of being outside. Luck's timing safeguards abundance; prospectors' gold never runs out, fate doles it out. The myth of the West in the United States recognizes luck and fever as primordial frontier forces, but only to the degree that these have been previously captured and contained in simulacra like casinos or Westerns. These frontier dioramas do not hide the violence, but they do deactivate its productive or foundational capacities.

The prospector and miner occupy contiguous spaces, but they create different times and geographies. While one picks through barely visible solids, the other dynamites mountains and erodes tons of material. The difference is not only one of scale, but also of spirit and the way the surface they perforate is understood. To delimit the land, mining undertakes a geographical analysis and leverages a concession; that is, it makes use of technology and the law. Limited in that way, space is understood as fixed; concessions are granted for specific areas and lodes. Mining does not create a space of enunciation because there is not a space in which to generate as much: *everything* has been hoarded. That *everything* means the land acquired, backed by legal concession, and the guarantee to the lode granted by geological research and annual projections of the minerals to be extracted. A place of enunciation is only possible when something is missing.

Mines operate on a countdown to the mineral's total exhaustion. "They reduced that red hill to rubble, they did away with it, then they stopped," the prospector says. The only thing that can extend a mine's productive life is future technological development. Mine tailings are mountains of mineral waste that mining companies hold on to, hoping at some point technical innovation will make their exploitation profitable.



These mountains of slag end up looking natural thanks to wind erosion, at the same time their contours are covered in cast-off dust that has not clung to the surface and that clouds the horizon with a brown patina.

Mining can be understood as an intensive classification mechanism that separates matter *with value* from matter *lacking attributes*; i.e. the earth's very resources. But sometimes it seems we lose sight of the fact that the difference between these two terms is symbolic rather than physical, fictitious and therefore unstable: the same particle can change categories. In reality, tailings expose the absurd limits of a classification system that mixes material and symbolic qualities, value and matter. The same distinction between matter with value and matter lacking attributes sustains the legal difference between land ownership and the right to exploit the resources it contains, which the law defines as "all minerals or substances that in lodes, strata, masses or reserves constitute deposits *whose nature may be distinct* to those lands' components" (Mexican Constitution, Article 27). The legal fiction that disassociates land from resources also allows us–once again–to think of the land as empty and in that way, opens a new form of frontier in a now populated space. From the point of view of mining cartography, national territory is "open" as long as it is not claimed by a preexisting license for exploitation.

The ease of acquiring concessions to expand into and occupy space derives from the fact that it is a right that is understood as distinct and independent from the surface occupation of a property. The right to exploitation is granted over a *solid of indefinite depth* limited by vertical planes; mining concessions work from the surface into the earth's interior, but everything that remains at the surface is overridden by underground exploration and extraction. This fictitious distinction between area and volume is what lends the concession a character of *not belonging* to the surface, and as such, the environment of life. Even though the concession cannot be moved or separated from the place to which it corresponds because it is intimately linked to the soil, its usufruct happens on a plane that has already been conceptually disassociated from the exploited land and all that live there.

The possibility of inaugurating new frontiers in an already occupied space exists because territories are made of folds. The frontier *is* the permanent possibility of folding and unfolding what is given, mixing from within and without. In *derrotero* chronicles and the language of the prospector, narration cannot be dissociated from physical movement in space; their capacity to activate certain folds lies in that apparently trivial fact. The breaking point shouldn't be understood as a limit but rather the pin in a hinge that allows for a double game of showing and hiding through a shift in surfaces. Movement only happens thanks to a small space around the pin, the empty cylinder into which it is inserted.

The urgency with which the line is considered today hides a fact of greater consequence: the reduction of all territory to the frontier's most static form–an uninhabited space open for extraction. T

Originally published on *Blog de Critica* on June 15th, 2017.
blogdecritica.com

ABOVE_ "Mr. Governor R. Corral. Apaches news absolutely none. Municipal Presidents have orders to persecute the savages and immediately notify the prefecture," Magdalena, Sonora, May 19th, 1890. General Archive of the State of Sonora. Fernández de Castro.

BELOW_ Gambusinos at the municipality of Caborca, Sonora. June 2017. Photo by Miguel Fernández de Castro.

NATALIA MENDOZA (b. Mexico City, 1981) holds a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University. **MIGUEL FERNÁNDEZ DE CASTRO** (b. Sonora, Mexico, 1986) is an artist based in Sonora who has developed a body of work based on long-term research projects.

Etienne de France, stills from the video project *Looking for the Perfect Landscape*, 2017. A dual nature film, between documentary and fiction, about the US American colonialization of Native American, Mohave aboriginal territory of the Colorado River Indian Tribe. Produced on an invitation by France Los Angeles Exchange (FLAX) in May and June 2017, the film was made in consultation with the Autry Museum of the American West. It will premier at the Echo Park Film Center on November 5. More information at terremoto.mx/etienne-defrance and etiennedefrance.com ⤒

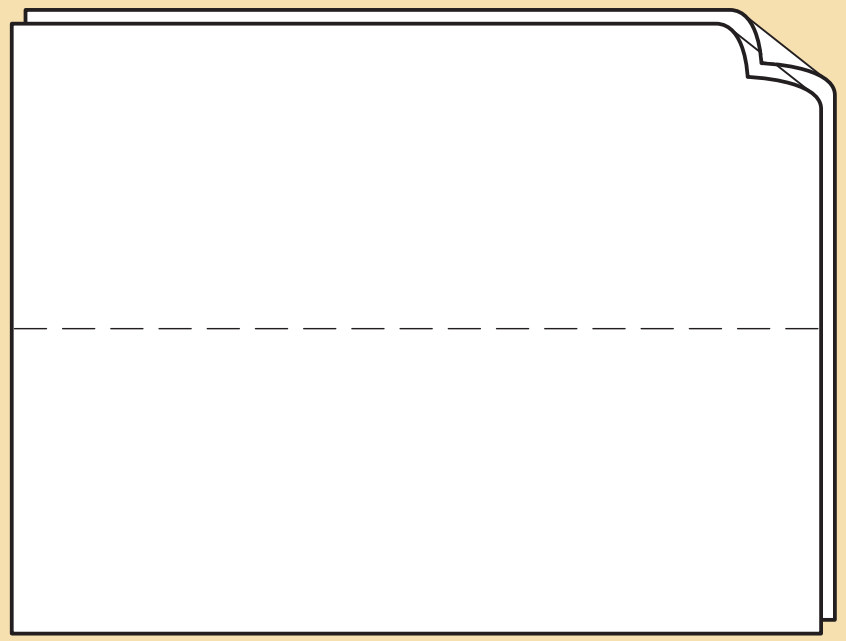
Passing through Dimensions

Pour your voice through the infinitely faced shaped paper of your making. Shout, sing, talk, growl. Let your sound delimit time. This is your new space and so it sounds and resounds.

Pasando a través de las dimensiones

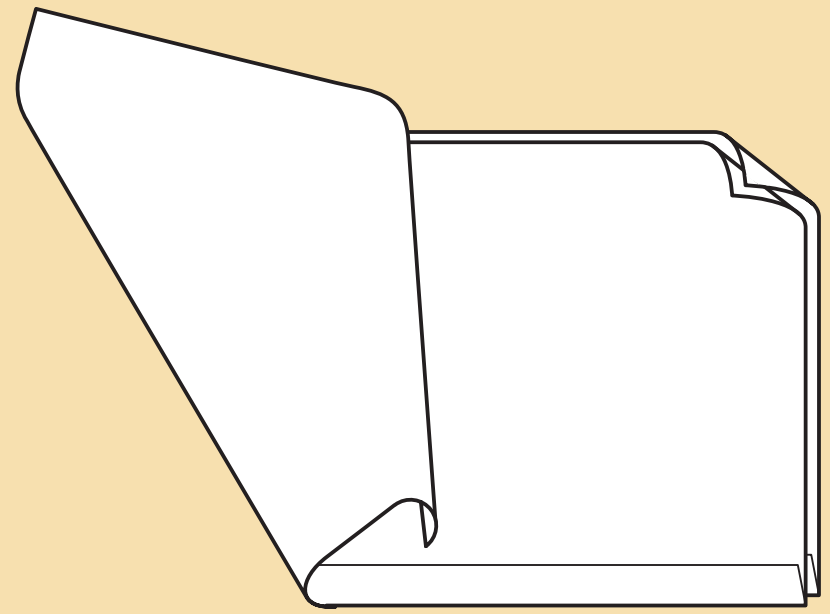
Vierte tu voz a través del papel de caras infinitas de tu hechura. Grita, canta, habla, gruñe. Que tu sonido delimite el tiempo. Este es tu nuevo espacio y así suena y resuena.

DO IT YOURSELF PAPER INSTRUMENT (MEGAPHONE)
BRICOLAJE DE INSTRUMENTO DE PAPEL (MEGÁFONO)

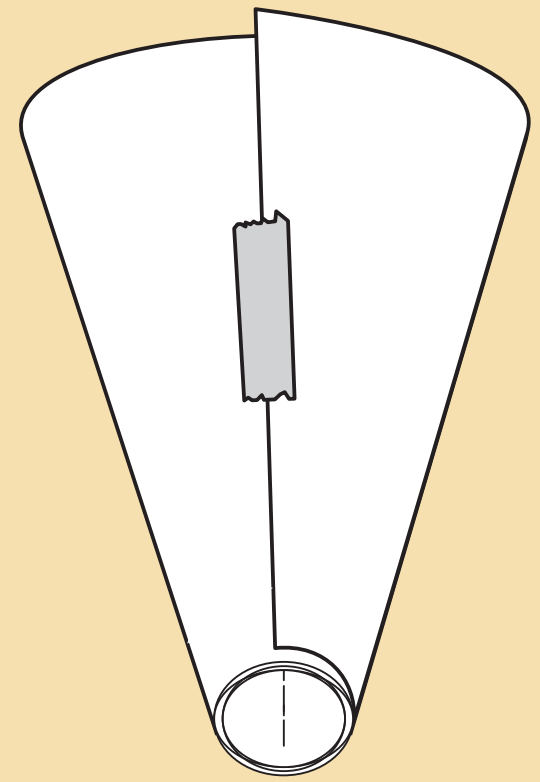


1. **Take two sheets of paper overlapping. Fold them in half.**
   Toma dos hojas de este papel y superponlas. Dobla el papel a la mitad.

2. **On the side where the paper is folded make another fold around 1 inch for the mouthpiece.**
   En el lado donde se pliega el papel haz otro doblez de alrededor 1 pulgada para la boquilla del instrumento.

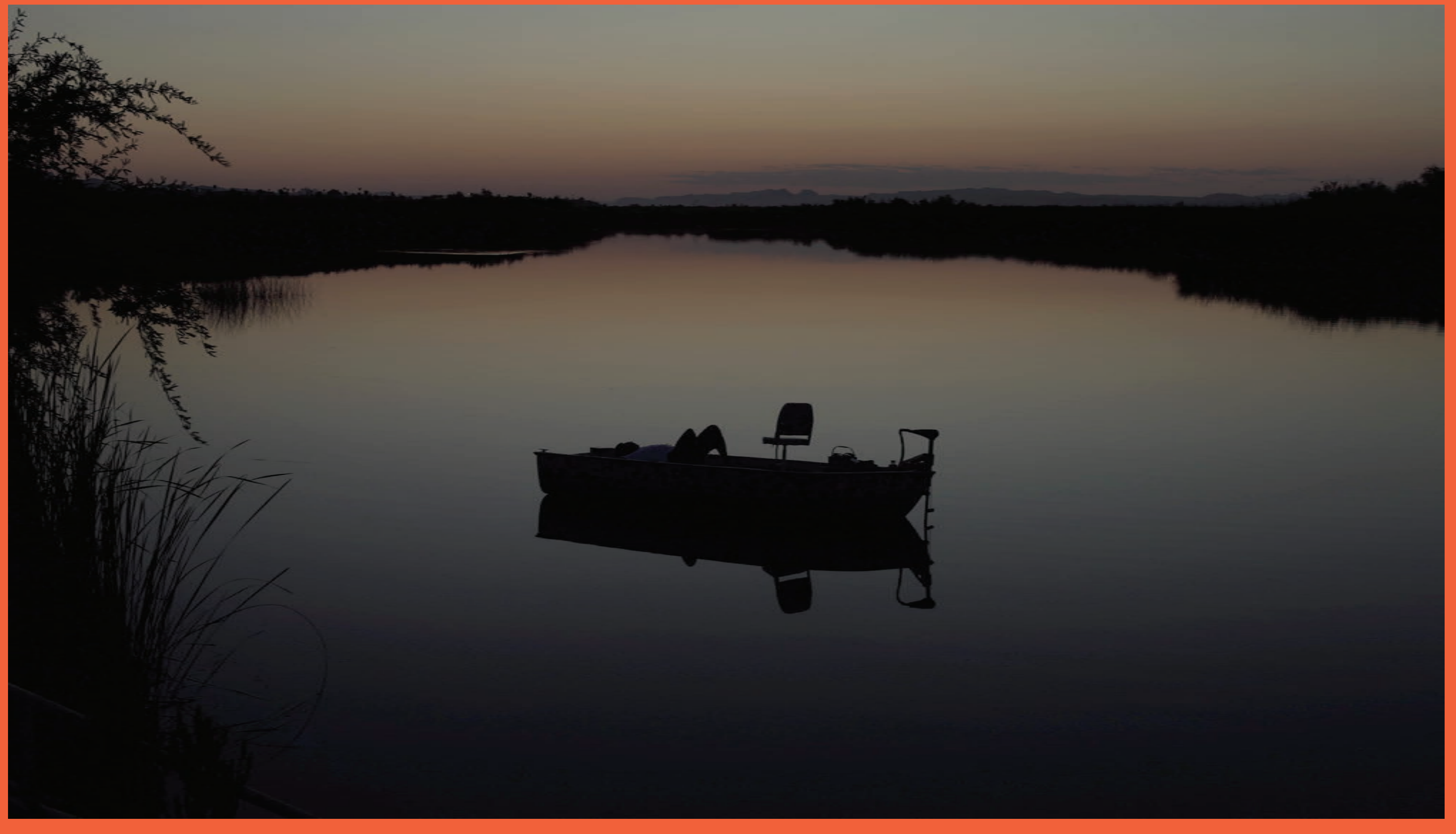


3. **Roll the paper up from one corner of the second fold until the paper takes the shape of a cone.**
   Enrolla el papel de una esquina del segundo doblez hasta que el papel tome la forma de un cono.



4. **Tape the edge of the paper to secure it.**
   Asegura el papel con un pedazo de cinta.

Carmina Escobar, *Passing Through Dimensions*, 2017



EJ Hill, A Declaration, 2017

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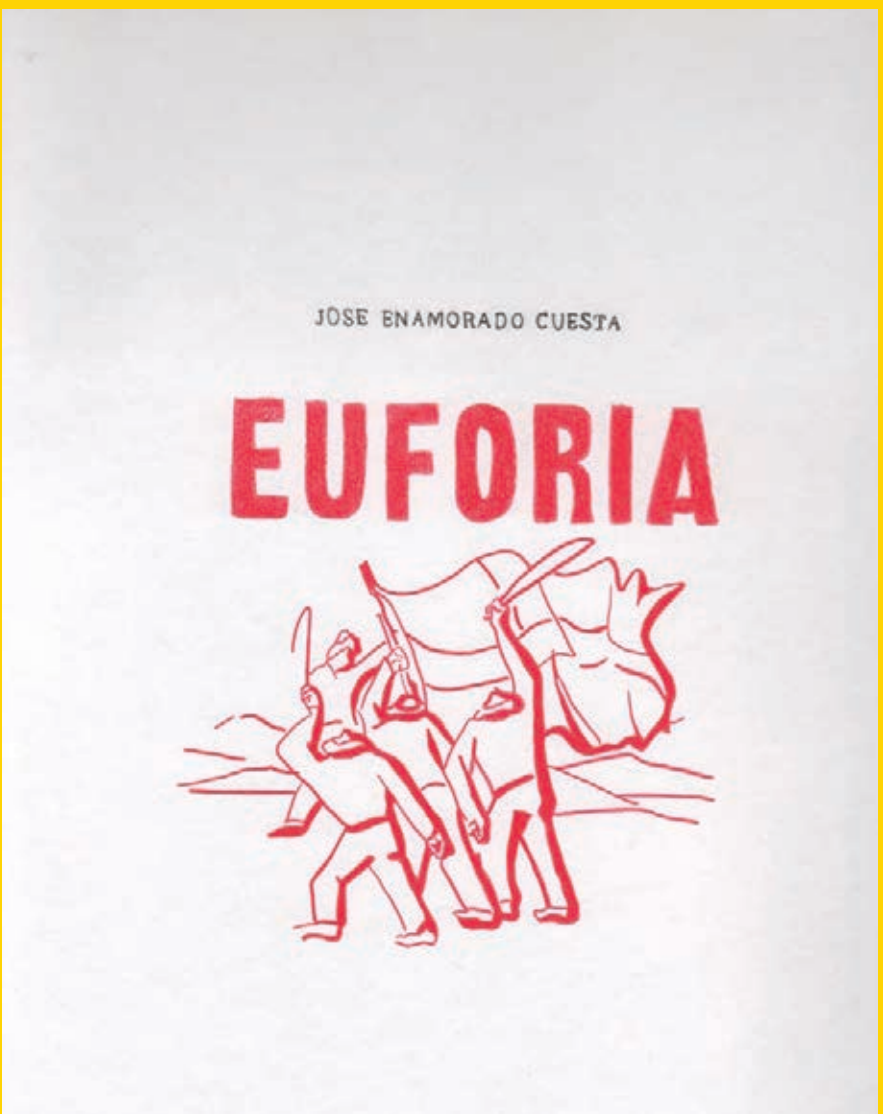
Photo by Christel Robleto

WHAT COULD BE HARMFUL ABOUT PRACTICAL COOKING AND CONTEMPORARY NEWS OTHER THAN THAT, A BETTER AND THRIVING LIFE FOR THE ANTI-COLONIAL, DECOLONIAL DREAMER IS IN ITSELF, THE THREAT?



ABOVE_ Monica Rodriguez, *Las Antillas para los Antillanos* at LACE, 2016. Photo courtesy of the artist.

MIDDLE_ Monica Rodriguez, *Botin Ocupado* (detail of *Euforia*), 2014. Photo courtesy of the artist.

BELOW_ Monica Rodriguez, *Las Antillas para los Antillanos* at LACE, 2016. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Archiving for New Worlds

Monica Rodriguez's research as practice explores international and intergenerational struggles for Caribbean independence. by Eunsong Kim and Gelare Khoshgozaran

ABOVE_ *Video Antillano* (still of contribution by Luis Vazquez from Trinidad & Tobago). One of the online "exquisite corpse" projects.

The Antilles for the Antilleans. This is how Puerto Rican nationalist Ramon Emeterio Betances calls for the independence of the Caribbean and the foundation of an Antillean Confederacy. Artist Monica Rodriguez describes her project *Las Antillas para los Antillanos* as a consideration of that call.

The project is an ongoing research collection that when exhibited takes the shape of a temporary "Caribbean research center." The collection includes a vast variety of objects, books, essays, drawings and documents. It involves fifty-one collaborating artists (to date) living across the different islands in the Caribbean, including Beatriz Santiago Muñoz (Puerto Rico), Andy Roberts (Haiti and US) and Kelman Duran (Dominican Republic and Los Angeles). Connecting its remote participants, a digital version of the research project is consolidated in a Dropbox folder, to be elaborated and edited by its collaborators. Inspirations for the project include classical texts such as Roberto Fernández Retamar's *Caliban* essay, Eduard Glissant's concepts of "creolization" and "antillanité," and poems by Nicolas Guillen, among many other resources in English and Spanish. Among these texts also appears *The Artist In The Caribbean*, an open letter by CLR James originally delivered in 1959 at the University College of the West Indies Mona, in which James poses the following question:

"Is there any medium so native to the Caribbean, so rooted in the tight association which I have made between national surroundings, historical development and artistic tradition, is there any such medium in the Caribbean from which the artist can draw that strength which makes him *[sic]* a supreme practitioner?" In a call to the importance of the nationalist artist, defined as a practitioner of a wide range of mediums, including literature, painting, architecture, etc., James compellingly states in his letter: "the universal artist is universal because he is above all national."

It is not uncommon among contemporary artists to incorporate extensive research, archiving and cataloging as part of their practice. Artists' research, an often uncompensated and unacknowledged labor, may exist as independently from the artwork, as a contextualizing backdrop or as a complementary element to the "final project." For Monica Rodriguez the research *is* the process of the production. The work is the material revisited, collected and (re)created that fills the space of a gallery and turns it into a library or research center. More than displacing objects and items from the colonial archives–a curatorial process that borrows on loan–the artist is interested in the "building of an archive" that often takes a collaborative form.

Following her trajectory on archival transformation, in the Los Angeles iteration of Monica Rodriguez's *Las Antillas para los Antillanos,* as part of *Open Air Prisons* (September–November 2016), the project room at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions was transformed into a "Caribbean research center." Books, publications, documents and drawings were organized next to images of food, flags and listening stations. The mats and pillows on the floor, as well as the desks and chairs, implied the center as a space for study and contemplation, a space between a personal library and an artist's studio.

In Rodriguez's words, "The project uses Puerto Rican nationalist Ramon Emeterio Betances' call–Antilles for the Antilleans–as starting point to build connections between cultural producers among the Caribbean, a region where political and economic paradigms have prevented the development of a creative and fair flux between islands. This has historically been due to language barriers, cultural and ethnic differences, and because of the economic and political structures implements by colonial powers. It is, therefore, the archive's core intention, to prompt a much-needed dialogue about what it means to be Caribbean through an articulation of collective social exchange. In other words only through collectivity can we (The Antilleans) work together towards a consideration of decolonization strategies through a creative supportive network."

The online collaborations include the use of "exquisite corpse" as a way to network artists across the Caribbean islands. Rodriguez's project investigates the history of Puerto Rico's colonization as beginning with the question of the Caribbean *writ large*. By examining the interconnections of Caribbean colonization, the project digs into the deep and complex histories of political struggle, complicating language and ethnic similarities. Rather, she emphasizes that the islands in the Caribbean have been separated because of such differences–and not by their political distances. Hence it is part of her project's ambitions to imagine the relationships and connections among them through a creative, critical and explicitly political archive building process. At the core of Rodriguez's practice is the political question of methodology: how is Caribbean identity investigated through creative practice, and how are the results of such investigations displayed.

Their display often takes the form of transference. Another work, *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014) features twelve wooden frames that contain Rodriguez's drawings of confiscated books, taken by the U.S. Department of Justice during or after the Puerto Rican Nationalist Revolt of 1950. The drawings of book covers depict the reading selections of anti-colonial protestors and their allies as well as the range of threats perceived and felt by the colonial forces. In a drawing on the left hand side, *Arte de la Guerra* is drawn in black capital letters. Next is Edward Hallett Carr's *La Revolucion Ruse de Lenin a Stalin 1917–1929* in a soft brown marron. The drawings set up the scope of contractions in confiscation. Blatantly political titles, such as *La Luncha Por La Independencia de Puerto Rico* by Juan Antonio Corretjer and *El Fascismo* by Juan Carreras appear in the same red and black palette. They are intermixed with *Women in Kentucky Industries 1937* and the cookbook *Scholar et Francois Recettes de Cuisine Practique*, the letters drawn out in lapis blue with a pale pink depiction of a roasting pig. Through *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014) we learn that *Popular Science* and *Reader's Digest* were included in the confiscated materials. How are we to make sense of the threat that cookbooks, industrial histories, and contemporary science posed to colonial governments–in addition to the texts that could have only called for, not carried out, direct attack? Perhaps more importantly, the range of the drawings unfold the complex knowledge systems–life–of those associated with the Puerto Rican Nationalist Revolt of 1950.

Rodriguez's work sets up imaginative landscapes by re-situating artifacts from colonial archives through an auxiliary. Her drawings, sculptures and databases work to divulge the detailed accounts incorporated into colonial archives yet still missing from our own understanding (what and how much was taken from the resisters and why, and what explanations do they offer today?). They show us the possibilities offered when the archive is rendered to narrate those it has taken from. In *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014) we learn not only what the US colonial state feared, what it marked as a potential threat, but also about the life of those working towards liberation. They read everything, about how to fight, the histories of fighting, and *Reader's Digest*. What could be harmful about practical cooking and contemporary news other than that, a better and thriving life for the anti-colonial, decolonial dreamer is in itself, the threat? Such are some of the questions leaping out of the drawings in *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014).

The project allows us to imagine a museum of confiscated items and gives flight to their potential variations: a museum of confiscated items across colonial regimes across the continents. While absurd and comical in its banality, it is also a profound entrance into the lives and communities of resisters. There is potential in understanding what power imagines will unravel its hold. We feel it through her beautiful, innocuous, DIY transformations of objects that induced so much fear in an all-powerful colonial government. In addition to the books in *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014), a series of molotov cocktails sits next to a box of matches, flags, and shovels. The presence of these items next to each other infers the potential for a fire. It has all the necessary elements but has yet to be ignited. What comes through is a rage that is well alive.

When we asked Rodriguez about the process of selecting archives, and her method of researching, she recounts that formal methods cannot easily be applied to government records of resistance. When she was in New York City interested in making work about the Puerto Rican Nationalist Revolt of 1950 she looked at the archives at Hunter College. She tells us that the records that became translated as drawings in *Botin Ocupado (libros)* (2014) were in boxes about Puerto Rican history but did not necessarily announce themselves as documents about the Revolt.

Rodriguez's bodies of work re-imagine classification systems and forms of knowledge for the historical to present day protester, and new and old possibilities of political Caribbean affinities, and accentuate the lived politics of the Master Archives. Her work is also an archive for new dreams: a world not yet entered but being imagined. ℝ

THERE IS POTENTIAL IN UNDERSTANDING WHAT POWER IMAGINES WILL UNRAVEL ITS HOLD.

EUNSONG KIM and **GELARE KHOSHGOZARAN** co-founded *contemptorary.org* to support an archive of queer and women of color artists and the emerging and alternative perspectives of radical aesthetics.

Art after LA/LA

How Los Angeles Can Make PST Stick. by Alma Ruiz

Come September, all of Southern California will be in the thrall of Latin American / Latino art. Why? Because after years of research and hard work by museums, alternative spaces, university galleries, and many other institutions, *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles / Latin America* (*PST: LA / LA*) will be officially inaugurated. This massive effort, spearheaded and mostly funded by the Getty Foundation, is unprecedented in its ambition and scope. Comprising seventy-four exhibitions, *PST LA / LA* covers the history and culture of a region that extends from the United States to Tierra del Fuego, and goes back thousands of years.

However, many questions remain that are pivotal to the future of Latin American / Latino Art in Los Angeles—and by extension in the United States—once *PST: LA / LA* comes to a close in early 2018. What will *PST*'s legacy be? Will art professionals acknowledge that Latino / Chicano art is inherently part of United States' art history? Will the scholarship collected in exhibitions and catalogs be enough to rewrite the canon, so Latin American and Latino / Chicano artists are more visible in the future? And what will institutions and individuals do to carry this mission forward?

Initially, *PST: LA / LA* centered around art made in Latin America. Then, after discussions with participants and the Getty Foundation, it expanded to showcase Chicano / Latino artists alongside their Latin American peers. Idurre Alonso, Getty Research Institute's Associate Curator, and co-curator of *Photography in Argentina, 1890-2010: Contradiction and Continuity* hopes their inclusion will "recover artists and movements that have been 'hidden or forgotten.'" Left out of the mainstream, Chicano / Latino artists had to invent their own institutions—like New York's El Museo, founded over forty-five years ago by artist and educator Raphael Montañez Ortiz to create a sense of identity for New York's Puerto Rican community, or LA's Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), which has been advocating for Latino / Chicano artists since 1976. *PST* will be a remarkable opportunity for Chicano / Latino artists to receive the attention they long deserved: at last count, more than thirty *PST* exhibitions include the work of Chicano / Latino artists.

"Over the course of the planning leading up to *PST: LA / LA*, there has been a welcome and positive shift towards greater emphasis on the Latin American diaspora in the United States" says Tatiana Flores, associate professor at Rutgers University and the curator of *Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago* at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach. For some local institutions, it is also the first time they are engaging with Latin American and Latino themes. The Chinese American Museum (CAM) and the California African American Museum (CAAM) teamed up for *Circles and Circuits: History and Art of the Chinese Caribbean Diaspora,* which examines the contributions of artists of Chinese descent in Cuba, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and other islands. This exhibition, along with Flores's show on Caribbean art, also considers the art of non-Spanish and non-Portuguese speaking artists, a gesture that Flores says "marks a real shift in consciousness" and "questions the continental bias of the concept of 'Latin America.'"

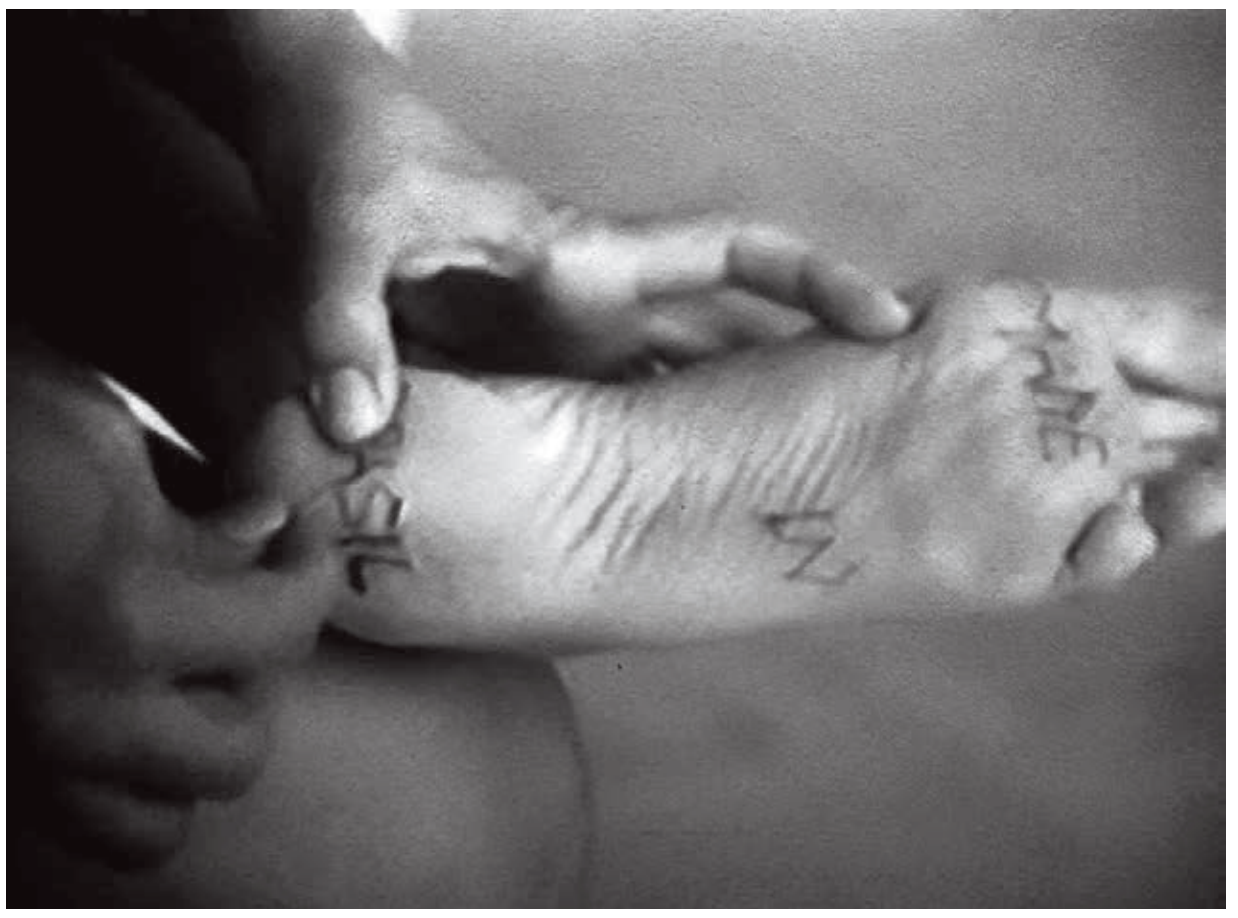
Although unanticipated, *PST: LA / LA* also offers a number of exhibitions devoted to women artists or involving substantial representation of women. The Hammer Museum's *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, for example, includes work by artists hailing from Argentina, Brazil, Caribbean, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela, and the curators later added work by Chicana and Latina artists living in the US, though they did not amend the show's title. Here, visitors will have a rare opportunity to see a broad cross-section of inter-generational work by known and under-known, contemporary and modern women artists.

The magnitude of *PST: LA / LA* and the way numerous institutions have embraced this initiative could give Latin American and Latino art curators a false sense of acceptance. Alas, many Southern California institutions have seen *PST: LA / LA* as an opportunity to get financial aid from a powerful institution like the Getty Foundation. "Without it, it would have been impossible to put together some of these comprehensive exhibitions…especially small and mid-size museums that commonly have very limited budgets" says Alonso. If so, it is not expected that all participating institutions will show Latin American / Latino Art more frequently or ever again.

Posing these queries to some of the curators whose exhibitions are part of this initiative, their responses varied. Miki Garcia, the chief curator and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara and organizer of *Guatemala from 33,000 km: Contemporary Art, 1960–Present* believes that "the breadth and depth that this initiative is supporting will both add new thinking as well as re-write former positions on the field." Alonso contends that *PST: LA / LA* will not "rewrite or generate a new canon" but "may help 'discover' new significant artists and make the Latin American art field more visible in Southern California." What would it take for Los Angeles art institutions to actually match in their programing the impact Latino artists and Latino people have had on art history and our city itself?

Collaborating with Latin American museums may be one lesson already learned. *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time* is the latest example of LACMA's collaboration with Mexican museums. Organized by LACMA and the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, the exhibition compares two giants of twentieth century art, tracing their similar academic training and shared interest in antiquities. By teaming with a Mexican museum and Mexican curators, LACMA was able to access scholarship and documentation that would have been out of reach for a monolingual curator or those less familiar with Mexican art. LACMA was also able to secure financing offered for cultural cooperation between nations.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR LOS ANGELES ART INSTITUTIONS TO ACTUALLY MATCH IN THEIR PROGRAMING THE IMPACT LATINO ARTISTS AND LATINO PEOPLE HAVE HAD ON ART HISTORY AND OUR CITY ITSELF?



ABOVE_ Carlos Almaraz, *Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit Go to Town*, 1982. Collection of Robert M. DeLapp, Los Angeles. © Carlos Almaraz Estate. Photo courtesy Robert M. DeLapp Gallery.

MIDDLE_ Letícia Parente (Brazilian, 1930-1991), *Marca registrada* (Registered trademark), 1975. Video, black and white, sound. 10:19 min. Private collection; courtesy Galeria Jaqueline Martins. Artwork © the artist.

BELOW_ Raphael Montañez Ortiz, *The Ritual Piano Destruction Concert*, 2017, performance on June 9, 2017, 7:00pm at LAXART. Photo by Storm Ascher.

For *PST: LA / LA*, LACMA has organized five exhibitions, making it the largest among institutional contributions[1]. With this magnitude of programing, the museum is addressing two irreversible facts: the city's increasing Latino presence and the growing importance of art made in Latin America and by Chicanos and Latinos in the United States. More, it builds on LACMA's desire to see local Latinos as museum goers and art patrons—a commitment that Michael Govan, LACMA's director, publicly expressed even before *PST*.

History tells us that powerful, wealthy individuals make a difference in the art that's shown and discussed. Many private collectors helped fund the exhibitions and acquisitions of Latin American art at the Museum of Contemporary Art organized between 1996 and 2015, but the consistent support of entrepreneur Eugenio López, a MOCA trustee, made it possible for the museum to build a program on Latin American art before many other US institutions. With the opening of his own museum in Mexico City in 2013, his support declined and so did MOCA's commitment. Who will step up to fill the gap?

In New York, notable collectors like Estrellita Brodsky and Patricia Phelps de Cisneros have endowed curatorial chairs of Latin American art, donated numerous artworks to local museums, served on museum boards, and funded scholarly publications and libraries of Latin American art. To match these efforts in building collections, exhibitions, and public

1_ The five exhibitions are: *Home—So Different, So Appealing; A Universal History of Infamy; Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico, 1915–1985; Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz; and Painted in Mexico, 1700–1790: Pinxit Mexici.*

respect for Latin American art, it would take Latin American / Latino philanthropists living in Los Angeles to offer their time and resources, and join museum councils and boards.

Institutions can become more open to art from Latin America by hiring specialists, as some major US museums have already done. According to Arteinformado, there are about twenty-five women curators of Latin American art working in large and small institutions across the United States. Often US and Latin American-born, these art professionals are making a difference by organizing well-informed exhibitions, adding to permanent collections, and cultivating donors, and several are involved in *PST: LA / LA*. Their first-hand knowledge helps eliminate some of the stereotypes long identified with curating Latin American and Latino art, and offers more accurate—that is, more complex—representations.

The Getty Foundation has made an extraordinary intellectual and financial investment to bring Latin American / Latino Art to Southern California. I applaud their vision, and I challenge Los Angeles: Will we let *PST* be a one-off curiosity, or will we embrace Latin American art / Latino art as a regular and vital part of the cultural fabric of our city? ℝ

ALMA RUIZ is Senior Fellow at Sotheby's Institute of Art – Claremont Graduate University.

ABOVE_ *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time*, December 4, 2016–May 7, 2017. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA. Artworks: © 2016 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, © 2016 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Cultural Representation and the Demise of NAFTA

Eduardo Abaroa and Rubén Ortíz-Torres talk about the art scenes in LA and Mexico City framed by globalization in a neoliberal era. by Eduardo Abaroa

IF THE DISCOURSE THAT VALIDATED GLOBALIZATION IS NOW OBSOLETE, ALONG WITH THAT WHICH VALIDATED THE NATION-STATE, THE ONLY THINGS LEFT ARE PLACES OF AUTONOMY AND DISSIDENCE.

ABOVE_ Eduardo Abaroa; *Total Destruction of the Anthropology Museum*, (Photoshop), 2016. Photographic mural. Photo courtesy of the artist.

BELOW_ Eduardo Abaroa & Rubén Ortiz-Torres, *Fernando Valenzuela; Aquí y en China*, 2002. From the series *Calimocho Styles*. Acrylic/urethane and metal springs. 30 x 33.5 x 17 in.

Eduardo Abaroa: I want to begin by recalling a discussion we had many times while I was living in Los Angeles, your adopted city. Why is there so little contact between the art scene in California and that of Mexico City? Even with shows like *Phantom Sightings* in the Tamayo Museum there is still a lot of distance.

Rubén Ortiz-Torres: We would have to begin by mentioning the estrangement that exists between the different art scenes in California and Los Angeles, and those of Mexico. There are several parallel art worlds that are fairly disconnected.

There are artists from LA who work within an international circuit but seldom show their work in the city, as happened with Jason Rhoades, and happens today for example with Jorge Pardo. There is a Chicano art scene that is very disconnected from contemporary art, yet there is another emerging Chicano art world where curators and artists do participate in museums, galleries, and art schools. There is a "low brow" art scene that has its own magazines, galleries, and collectors. There are other intermediate level galleries with a more local participation. There is another "art" world which is being consolidated in the realm of social practice, etc. Therefore, I think there are connections between some of these art scenes and there are some that never connect. There are cases like Regen Projects, one of the most important galleries in its very established context, which has an important connection with Kurimanzutto Gallery in Mexico City and its artists. LA museums like LACMA and the Armory in Pasadena are interested in a deeper relationship with the neighboring country, and some others like MOCA, as well as the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego and the Museum of Latin American Art have, at some point, been very aware of what was happening in Mexico. Today it is the Getty Center that it is now provoking these connections. Regarding Mexico, there are galleries that are representing artists from California like Labor (Gala Porras-Kim) or Yautepec, which represented my student, Morgan Manduley. And museums like MUAC have presented the work of Asco. There are results of this new cultural corridor that are very important and can't be denied. The art school SOMA in Mexico City is one of these results, not only because some artists who teach there attended art schools in Southern California, but also because of the impact it is having on young artists from here as well. The importance of this axis is growing, although it might still be invisible to certain Latin American intellectuals who are imperviously still looking up to Paris. I still find comments in social networks lamenting the kidnapping of Frida Kahlo by Chicano artists during a look alike contest in a Dallas museum (which of course was not Chicano). The comments implied a double racism, at once chauvinist and malinchist, where the foreign and the Mexican is simultaneously deprecated. Nevertheless, there is a new generation of artists and intellectuals who are already bi-national and whose experience is in itself a more significant encounter beyond the distance and the pending walls.

Now, it is of course easier to stay informed about what happens in Mexico. Nevertheless, through social networks, the phone, Skype, Univision, the digital version of La Jornada, the Youtube videos of Galatzia, or the gossip of visitors I only see fragmented, edited, and partial representations of what is happening, which I am sure is way larger and more interesting and complex than it seems.

EA: When I visited LA there were certainly several art scenes. Mexico is not so cosmopolitan, but it was a small scene twenty years ago, where most artists knew each other. Now we have a really impressive amount of artist spaces, galleries, schools, etc. The multimedia attitude of contemporary art has spread to the most dynamic places: Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey, Tijuana, Oaxaca, and to other cities of Mexico. Artists are traveling to remote areas of the country for several reasons. No one can have a clear picture of all the art that is happening in the country, or even in Mexico City. This is healthy, but unfortunately there is not much visibility for whoever does not belong to a very reduced group. We have the usual problems people face in many parts of the world. Women, ethnic or social minorities, or even specific media do not have shared opportunities and this is a big problem. The fact that the number of galleries has increased a lot since the year 2000 has not meant that

the scene is more open. On top of that it is clear that the return of the PRI party to the government has lead to greater control over cultural institutions, and today museum directors and curators have to be more careful. Many practice self-censorship. Such a state of affairs is terrible for Mexico, which urgently needs open, plural, and free media.

Mike Davies has described LA as an "ecology of fear," a city whose people have always felt themselves to be on the brink of catastrophe, be it an earthquake, a forest fire, drought, air pollution, riots, etc. Mexico City has this dystopian character, too, with very similar themes to which we now have to add organized crime on an unprecedented scale. But it could be that not only the cities, but also the two countries are facing a terrible moment. Presidents Peña and Trump are considered similar sociopolitical tsunamis, but the former only has a local effect, while the latter is a threat to the whole world. Is there a role for art in this situation?

Your early work includes these paintings where you imply the destruction of national identity in Mexico as a result of the 1985 earthquake. What has happened in the almost thirty years since then? Is there a possible revision of so-called Neo-Mexican art? There are many artists in Mexico that are working along similar lines as yours back then. I'm thinking of Mariana Castillo, Fernando Palma, or some younger ones like Juan Caloca. If whatever had to do with Mexican iconography felt forbidden during the nineties and part of the two-thousands, to look back at this damaged territory seems crucial today. It is not a revival, obviously.

ROT: Regarding the idea of "Mexican" art and its relationship with the "International" during the last thirty years, I do not feel that anything has emerged. As Nietzsche explains, it feels like a sort of eternal recurrence, a cycle that we seem trapped in–between the reassertion of a local "Mexican" culture on the one hand, and, on the other, its negation in favor of a role in or an integration into a supposedly more "modern," "universal," or "international" model. During the eighties I thought that a particular reading of postmodernism would help break with Nietzsche's cycle in favor of a more Hegelian, dialectic possibility, where the Mexicanist theses and its antitheses of international rupture could reach a syntheses in which you could embrace both, or that the negation of one of these alternatives wouldn't be necessary. Unfortunately, during the nineties the cycle of the eternal recurrence returned. The attempts to synthesize and the invention of hybrids were in fact stigmatized and accused of nationalism when in many cases they were impure parodies of nationality. The ignorance of the international art world contributed to this. Many people never realized that the Mexican School ended long ago, when many avant-garde experiments and ruptures took place. There was some opportunism by people who were championed as breaking with Muralism during the nineties.

The idea of the end of art today may open the possibility for these syntheses in Mexico City and Los Angeles. Maybe these fusions in LA will help people begin to understand or at least to digest and negotiate the Babelian multitude of languages and identities in competition and conflict.

I agree that one of the grave consequences of globalization and the substitution of a local validation system for an international one has been the limits imposed on ethnic and social minorities, as well as on gender and sexuality. Curiously, today it is those countries whose colonial projects have been the most globalizing where we now have these xenophobic and nationalistic attitudes, like in England and the USA. I also agree with the dystopian condition and apocalyptic notion of the Ring of Fire[1] that joins Mexico City and Los Angeles. Maybe we could also include Tokyo, although organized crime and the incompetence of leaders do not seem to be functioning in Asia in the same way.

Maybe an alternative to the obsolete model of the nation-state and these desperate nationalist populisms in times of globalization is the independence and interconnection of cosmopolitan cities that in many cases already function as sanctuaries.

EA: If the discourse that validated globalization is now obsolete, along with that which validated the nation-state, the only things left are places of autonomy and dissidence. In Mexico, there have been many popular struggles in this sense, even before the Zapatista movement. They run parallel and alternatively to the course of progressive globalization. But for right-wing intellectuals to give any credit to these causes is to remain in Roger Bartra's cage of melancholy.

A few days ago a Mexican critic, Jesús Silva Herzog-Marquez, wrote a piece about the recent Andy Warhol show in Mexico City[2] denouncing the "Warholism" of politics and the fascism of banality which in his view anticipated the time of Trump. It is a very partial criticism of Warhol's superficiality, which forgets the social movement to which this artist belonged, one that, in its own way, implied a sort of ironic reconfiguration and even a social and sexual liberation, instead of the strengthening of the autocratic, theocratic, and patriarchal system that Trump promotes. A lot of people believe that there is something that wakes up, or that re-emerges from American discontent. But in any case this return of which you speak is bothersome because it could be understood as national spirit or a certain fatalism of people, as if we could not get away from specifically USA issues or specifically Mexican issues. The left and right in both countries are traditional, they respond to a limited amount of premises guided by neoliberalism. I believe that aesthetic thought has in this ground its larger capacity for action and change. Unfortunately, it is co-opted almost immediately by different instances.

ROT: Of course, I am also bothered by this "fatalist" trap of polarized alternatives that supposedly substitute each other with every cycle, when in fact these and other realities have coexisted and are still coexisting, mixed with each other to some degree... And they will coexist in this way in the future. The "Make America Great Again" slogan is particularly absurd and paradoxical in this critique of eternal returns. Which America? "Great Again," like when? Before the conquest, smallpox, syphilis, genocide, and slavery? The country that has in a certain way–for good or bad–symbolized and materialized the Western ideals of modernity, the new, pluralism, and democracy is today surrendering to an original fake myth. Nationalist positions that have been used to resist colonization, globalization, and foreign intervention by imperialist countries are now co-opted (as you mention) to justify these imperialisms in an attempt to specifically avoid pluralism and to limit the rights of supposedly stranger minorities.

I read the criticism you mentioned about banality, frivolity, and the "dictatorship" of fame in Andy Warhol that allegedly justifies Trump. By the way, Trump did not like the silk screens that Warhol made of his tower because they did not color coordinate with the building, and Warhol didn't like the lying billionaire either because he was cheap and did not buy them. To this great lost "America," Warhol and the rest of modern and contemporary art are certainly degenerate. Trump on his part has wanted to defund federal support for the arts and even used the adjective used by the Nazis to describe Chris Ofili's work *The Holy Mary Virgin*, saying it was "absolutely gross, degenerate."

I imagine with terror and fascination the possibility of a "neo-Americanism." T

1_ The Ring of Fire is a major area in the basin of the Pacific Ocean associated with a nearly continuous series of oceanic trenches, volcanic arcs, and volcanic belts and/or plate movements.

2_ Search for: Letras Libres, "Warhol y el fascismo de la banalidad."

ABOVE_ Eduardo Abaroa; *Total Destruction of the Anthropology Museum (Explosives)*, 2012. Video stil. Photo courtesy of the artist.

MIDDLE_ Rubén Ortiz-Torres; *Plata o Plomo*, 2017. Silver, lead, ethyl carbamate, brillantine, aluminium; 20.47 x 47.24 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

BELOW_ Rubén Ortiz-Torres; *El Fin del Modernismo*, 1986. Acrylic on cloth, 78.74 x 47.24 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

RUBÉN ORTIZ-TORRES received his MFA from the California Institute of Arts in 1992. He is a Mexican-born artist who has been living and working in Los Angeles since 1990.

EDUARDO ABAROA (b. 1968, Mexico City) earned his Bachelor of Fine Art from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (UNAM) in 1992 and his Masters of Fine Art from The California Institute of the Arts in 2001.

Radical Women in a City of Dreams

When museums re-write art history to include the women they so long ignored.

by Arden Decker

"Wishes, dreams, and fantasies are important parts of our creative lives. They are steps a writer integrates into her craft. They are the spectrum of resources to reach the truth, the heart of things, the immediacy and the impact of human conflict."

(Nellie Wong, 1979)[1]

How does a female artist become *radical*? It partly requires a bit of dreaming–imagining that something can be changed, that systems can be altered or interrupted, their biases revealed. Dreaming and daydreaming are part of the shared human experience and can help us to visualize the impossible. As feminist activist and poet Nellie Wong suggests, artists, like writers, must dream in order for their works to be conceived and realized, and so that they may communicate something to their audience. For most, these dreams are realized slowly over time. Fifteen or more years ago, the upcoming exhibition *Radical Women: Latin American Artists 1960–1985* hosted by the Hammer Museum might have seemed a mere pipe-dream, as rampant institutional sexism and racism had diminished or erased the presence of Latin American and Latinx artists in most museum collections and exhibitions in the United States. In 1985, when the Guerrilla Girls compiled their first survey on the presence of female artists in the United States, they found only one example across all New York institutions. According to an Art Newspaper survey, only 27% of 590 major solo shows in US institutions between 2007 and 2013 were devoted to female artists.[2]

Radical Women is part of the Getty's *Pacific Standard Time LA/LA* initiative, which boasts an expansive and ambitious roster of exhibitions dedicated to the art of Latin America and its connections to Los Angeles. As an art historian that primarily researches in Latin America, I, like many colleagues, am highly anticipating the arrival of the second edition of *PST*, as it presents an important moment to take stock of the state of our academic field as it is made visible in museums across the city. Of the numerous exhibitions that will be presented this fall, it is difficult to measure exact percentages of female artists that will be included, yet it is clear that *Radical Women* seeks to correct Latin American and Latinx art's relationship to feminist art histories through a historically framed presentation of experimental artworks from over fifteen countries.[3] I recently moved from Mexico City to Los Angeles, and I am curious to see how *Radical Women* will be received but, new to the city, I am also leery of putting forth definitive assessments of the relationship the exhibition will have to its local audiences. I am therefore presenting here a series of notes and questions on the changing tide surrounding the visibility of female artists in US museums, and what it means to present Latin American and Latinx artists within the walls of the Hammer museum.

Why call attention to Latin American and Latinx female artists and their radical work now? Since the mid-2000s, female artists have received greater attention globally, garnering market success through commercial galleries and undoubtedly encouraging the attention of museums. This is due in part to curators and feminist art historians that have helped persuade cultural institutions by addressing the invisibility of female and queer artists and artists of color. Several major exhibitions–including *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2007 and *Wack!*: *Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007, organized by Hammer curator Connie Butler–preceding *Radical Women* made waves by inserting feminist art history into major institutions. The very recent *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–1985,* also at the Brooklyn Museum, made a clear call for corrections to the omissions of white art history, seeking to make visible the black women artists that had been buried or ignored by the mainstream art world. These predecessors took up the charge of lending visibility to female artists globally and in the United States, but despite what seemed like an explosion of exhibitions dedicated to female artists, there was still a long way to go in order to create an expanded historical narrative of feminist art history that also included Latin American and Latina art.[4]

Why were these female artists forgotten or left out of the mainstream historical record in the first place? The answer is found in the extremely complex political histories of Latin American countries. *Radical Women* will be framed within the socio-political context of 1960–1985, decades in which most all Latin American countries were under official or unofficial dictatorships and neocolonial regimes. During these years, artists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and beyond confronted repression that squashed all matter of artistic expression and restricted critical questioning and research. These restrictions significantly impacted the writing of history during this time, and led to an erasure of

1_ Nellie Wong, "Flows from the Dark of Monsters and Demons: Notes on Writing," in *Radical Women Pamphlet* (San Francisco, 1979), quoted in Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," first published in Cherrie Morgana and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981).

2_ Gareth Harris, Julia Halperin, and Javier Pes, "What Does a Female Artist Have to Do to Get a Major Solo Show?" *The Art Newspaper* (29 April 2016): http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/what-does-a-woman-have-to-do-to-get-a-solo-show.

3_ Some of the exhibitions that traverse this terrain are: *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano LA* at ONE Gallery; *¡Murales rebledes! LA Chicana/o Murals under Siege* (LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes); and solo exhibitions of several women artists including Anna Maria Maiolino (MOCA) and photographer Laura Aguilar (Vincent Price Art Museum). There are also numerous exhibitions such as *Home–So Different, So Appealing* at LACMA, which includes many women artists.

4_ See: Connie Butler, Amelia Jones, and Maura Reilly, "Feminist Curating and the 'Return' of Feminist Art" in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2010): 31–43.

or a kind of amnesia about artists working outside of officially sanctioned (read *traditional*) practices.[5]

Artists such as those that will appear in *Radical Women* have suffered doubly, excluded from mainstream (white, hetero-patriarchal) art history due to both their gender and their cultural identity. This erasure is one reason why an exhibition like *Radical Women* would be dreamed up in the first place. The show's curators—Andrea Giunta and Cecilia Fajardo-Hill—are both art historians who have made significant contributions to the field of Latin American art history and have turned their expert attention to female artists and feminist art history for some time now. This exhibition builds upon decades of research and archival excavation to reconstruct histories that have been forgotten, but which are paramount to translating the current state of feminist art production. I will be curious to see what pedagogical models will be used to translate this art historical research to audiences that are likely unfamiliar with artists from Latin America, as well as the Chicanx and Latinx artists in their own backyards.

If *Radical Women* is positioned to write a new history of Latin American and Latinx artists, what role does Los Angeles play in the writing of this history? Connie Butler, curator of the exhibition *Wack!* has noted that Los Angeles has a different relationship to history and feminist art history because it is "always rewriting itself into [it]," and perhaps this ability will lend a unique context to the history that *Radical Women* will attempt to construct. "The City of Dreams" has a long and rich history of feminist art practice and exhibition making, including LACMA's watershed attempt at inserting feminist art history into the museum with *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, curated by art historian Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris in 1976, or, for example, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's inspiring installation and performance space *Womanhouse* (1972).

Aside from these precedents, *Radical Women* will also benefit from the history of radical Chicanx and Latinx artists and activists in Los Angeles, whose presence has been essential to the visibility of Latino communities. Curator Cecilia Fajardo-Hill explains in the exhibition's press release that "Los Angeles is a city whose very fabric is constituted by Latin American, Latina, and Chicana women, and I think *Radical Women* and *PST: LA/LA* will reveal a part of ourselves."[6] Given that Los Angeles has historically served as fertile ground for Chicanx and Latinx artists and artist-activists, what lessons may be learned from these Latin American predecessors when applied to timely and urgent concerns over US immigration policy, women's health care, and LGBTQ+ rights? Will this exhibition reflect the concerns over intersectionality that have shaped and helped to define the current moment of feminism in the United States, and if so, how? As intersections between Latin American and Latinx artists are beginning to be revealed, I am anxious to find out what the art of radical women might mean to Angelenos in the Trump era. Will the work of radical female artists of decades past have as much to say to us now as in their moment of creation? It is likely that the exhibition will inspire a new generation of artists to dream radically and to get to *the truth, the heart of things*, and show us something about ourselves. T

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ABOVE_ Feliza Bursztyn; *Cama (Bed)*, 1974. Assemblage with stainless steel scrap, cot, satin sheet, and engine, 43 4/16 × 70 7/8 × 29 9/16 in. Museo Nacional de Colombia. Artwork © the artist. Photo © Museo Nacional de Colombia / Andrés Mauricio López.

BELOW_ Graciela Iturbide; *Virgen de Guadalupe, Chalma, México*, 2008. Silver on gelatin. Photo courtesy of the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE

ABOVE_ Sandra Eleta; *Edita (la del plumero), Panamá (Edita [the one with the duster], Panama)*, 1977.

From the series *La servidumbre (Servitude)*, 1978–1979. Black and white photograph, 19 × 19 in. Courtesy of Galeria Arteconsult S.A., Panama. Artwork © the artist.

5_ See Andrea Giunta and George F. Flaherty, "Latin American Art History: An Historiographic Turn," *Art in Translation* vol. 9, sup. 1, 2017: 121-142. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17561310.2016.1246293.

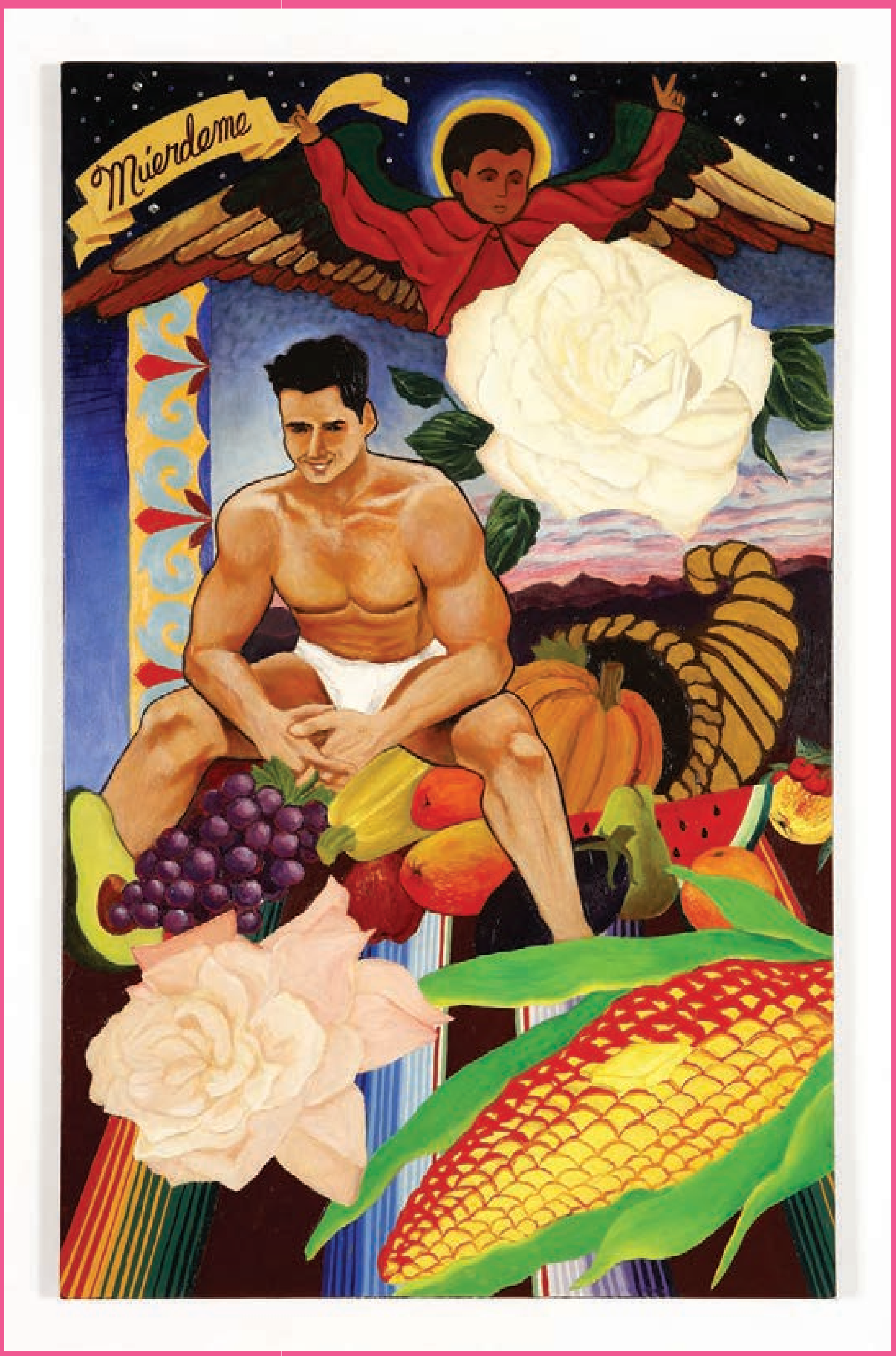
6_ Quoted in the exhibition press release: https://hammer.ucla.edu/fileadmin/media/Press_Releases/2016/Hammer_Radical_Women_English_FINAL.pdf.

IF *RADICAL WOMEN* IS POSITIONED TO WRITE A NEW HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINX ARTISTS, WHAT ROLE DOES LOS ANGELES PLAY IN ITS WRITING?

Mírame

A cross-generational narrative of queer Chicanx and Latinx artists finds a common space in LA. by Joey Terrill

I ASSUME, AS QUEER LATINX, WE ALIGN AS A COMMUNITY GALVANIZED AGAINST A CULTURAL HEGEMONY OF WHITE SUPREMACY.



ABOVE_ Gabriel Garcia Roman; *Carlos & Fernando*, 2015. Silkscreen print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

BELOW_ Joey Terrill; *Bite Me!*, 2004. Acrylic, oil, rhinestones on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist.

I don't attempt a critique of *Pacific Standard Time* or the myriad queer Latinx works that will be presented in it. What I offer instead is a personal reflection as a gay Chicano artist who is beginning to be considered an "elder" in the queer community, an identity I am learning to embrace and one that I don't take for granted.

Over the last several years I have participated in a number of art exhibitions that explore queer and Latinx themes. In most of these, my works from the 1970s, '80s, or '90s are positioned as "pioneering" attempts to provide a visual exploration of gay Chicanx or *maricón* identity often juxtaposed with work by artists born in the 1990s—a younger generation exploring their queer identity. The impulses to create community, to seek out others like us and to visually provoke the hetero dominant cultural assumptions are in both generations' work. We draw from the same popular culture and ethnic iconography for inspiration. But it seems to me that the advent of social media has allowed younger Latinx artists much larger virtual networks of artistic collaboration and a faster exchange of ideas and access to images. The gay artist circles of my youth seemed to have been smaller and more intimate.

Right now, I realize like never before just how different our paths have been. I assume, as queer Latinx, we align as a community galvanized against a cultural hegemony of white supremacy. Accepting that as a given, it is the wide variety of how we declare queerness in art that I find interesting. Not all queer Latinx art looks alike. But whatever the medium and whether in a public space or a white cube gallery, the prevailing theme for me is always "look at me:" *Mírame! Mira!* It declares and validates our presence and defies the world to be indifferent. Looking at the art of queer artists over the last couple of years, two things stand out to me: the role of AIDS and its impact on queer Latinx artists of my generation, and how social media shapes the current discourse, networking, and exploration of artistic practice.

The impact of AIDS on my generation left a gap between those that lived through that period and those born just before or shortly after anti-retroviral therapy (ART) was made available in 1996. Death and devastation left its psychological imprint on the older queer and Latino artist community. Post-traumatic stress is a given for those of us who have survived while our homo-social networks got smaller, as artists, friends, lovers, gallery owners, and art patrons died. Collectively, relationships were forged amidst the onslaught and, as a community, we cared and advocated for one another. The anger, grief, fear and loss became subjects in our work, but it was also important to continue declaring our sexuality, our friendships and homo-romance. *iMuérdeme! ¡Mírame!*

There are four exhibitions that are taking place in California that I would like to use as references to share a little bit of our stories, not just mine but those of my friends and artistic "partners-in-crime" who are no longer here.

In August, as an early start of the *Pacific Standard Time*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art opened *Playing with Fire*, a long overdue retrospective of the work of Carlos Almaraz, one of the most prolific and recognized Chicano artists, who died of AIDS in 1989 at the age of forty-eight. His untimely death becomes part of his story. A portion of the exhibition addresses his bisexuality and the internal conflicts about his same gender desire. These conflicts imbued some of his paintings with a queer subtext that provides them with a visual energy and passion that might be missing otherwise. Through a feast of expressionistic animals, body parts, and figures of both sexes (cis-gender male and female) with suggested sexual interplay, these paintings offer us an opportunity to rediscover the difficulty of coming out of the closet and of being honest with yourself in the pursuit of happiness through freedom.

Exhibitions like these were impossible to find when I was young. There were no spaces where you could find yourself represented as a queer Chicanx. I recently gave a tour to Latinx students in their teens and twenties of the exhibition *¡Mírame! Queer Latinx Expressions* at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, curated by Erendina Delgadillo, who has indicated that artists were selected specifically to reflect the "evolution in the arts community in both message and medium." Works by Alma Lopez, Laura Aguilar, myself, and Hector Silva anchor one end as older artists, alongside the work of younger artists like Ben Guila, Julio Salgado, Yosimar Reyes, and Xandra Ibarra. Overlapping explorations of immigration, racism, and deconstructed gender identities intersect with queerness without hesitation. Senadores, undocumented youth, cholos, and Mexican iconography blend together proudly. Where Almaraz struggled to resolve his identity as "Chicano" and to come to terms with his same gender desire, here the queer subtext is both intergenerational, front-and-center, and, in some cases, quite literal. This exhibition works then as a space of recognition that assures integration to a young generation.

A third exhibition, *Axis Mundo*, is split between MOCA PDC and the ONE Institute. It chronicles queer Chicano Networks in LA over the course of three decades from the 1960s to the 1990s, and features the work of Mundo Meza, who died in 1985. His paintings, drawings, costumes, and displays are represented as an "axis mundi" or central pillar from which pivot various networks of queer Latinx artistry, ranging from performance, fashion, design, painting, punk music, mail art, and AIDS advocacy. Included is the work of Jef Huereque, Teddy Sandoval (d. 1995), Jack Vargas (d. 1995), and Ray Navarro (d. 1990). With Meza as "axis mundi," it documents our queer artistic collaborations when a Chicano avant-garde in LA was emerging. With this exhibition more than any other, *Pacific Standard Time* starts to bridge the gap between queer Latinx generations. *Míranos!*

As Gabriel Garcia Roman explains, there is an ugent need for inserting our queer Chicanx stories and narratives out into a world that benefits white hetero-normativity. His work is currently featured in the exhibit *Queerly Tehuantin* at Galeria de La Raza in the Mission District in San Francisco. At forty-four, he is closer to my generation, and like me he chooses to borrow from the religious iconography of his Catholic upbringing as a starting point for creating beautiful portraits. Russian icons are his trope of choice, which he takes and re-engages by featuring friends and acquaintances with shimmering haloes and incorporating written text. I believe by replacing the faces of saints with portraits of Latinx advocates he bestows them with a secular holiness, recognizing them as "saints" within the Latinx community, a gesture that recognizes the sacrifices they have made for freedom and recognition.

Like Meza, Gabriel's artistic productions are collaborations that visualize diversity within our community. Gabriel states that through his icon portraits he wants "to push the narrative further by having the subject write about their identity around their portrait." He amplifies their voice by adding a screenprint of handwritten texts that spoke of their identity around their image inviting them to embrace themselves proudly. In each work the individuals literally proclaim their identity. Under the rubric of "queer Latinx" those declarations link his work to mine thematically, yet our strategies for creating work couldn't be more different. In the '70s when I started exploring the dual identities of being Chicano and "gay" the work was about where they intersected but also where they clashed which became the impetus for my art. Under the prevailing feminist mantra of the "personal is political," I proudly declared myself *maricón*, but also made confessional work about sexual dysfunction and romantic heartbreak. Calling myself Homeboy Beautiful, I called out racism in the gay white male community but also critiqued the machismo and self- loathing in the Chicanos and homeboys I knew. I used satire and visually borrowed from comic strips and *novelas*. My intent was to create a Chicano homo "space" (in popular culture) where we could declare and reveal all. 𝕋

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